

A FORECAST
OF THE
RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

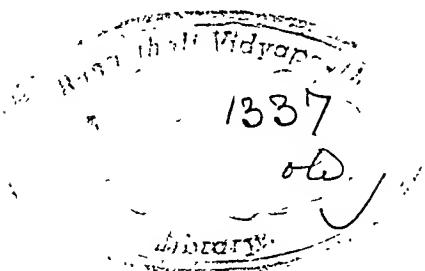
BEING SHORT ESSAYS ON SOME IMPORTANT
QUESTIONS IN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

BY
W. W. CLARK

"It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in Charity, rest in
Providence, and turn upon the poles of Truth."—LORD BACON

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PREFACE

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The following Essays, written at intervals between the years 1870 and 1876, are now reprinted with some important corrections and additions. They present a line of thought and investigation which has provided the writer with a solid basis for the exercise of a rational faith in the wisdom and goodness of an Almighty Creator.

The author makes no claim to literary skill in discussing subjects which have engaged the attention of so many great and thoughtful men; but, in an age like the present, when a growing materialistic philosophy is striving to abolish all belief in spiritual beings or a life after death, there is room for many workers in the same field; and it may be that a small book like the present will be read by some who would be deterred by more learned and elaborate works. He has aimed, therefore, at being suggestive rather than exhaustive, pointing the direction in which, as he believes, truth in these matters is to be found. Those who are perplexed and bewildered by the destructive criticism of modern

iconoclasts may find some assurance and comfort in knowing that a belief in an all-wise and good God, and in the immortality of His intelligent creatures, is not solely dependent upon the untenable hypothesis of any special revelation, whether of Church or Bible; but that those all-important beliefs have their origin in the depths of man's spiritual nature, from whence have issued those universal moral intuitions, which obtain their sanction alike from their beneficent influence on human progress, and from their complete harmony with the highest ideal of all ages.

In acquiring self-knowledge—the most important of all knowledge—it seems necessary to distinguish carefully between Intellectual Truth, or a knowledge of that which *is*, and Moral Truth, or the perception of that which is *right*. A man may be thoroughly earnest and good, and at the same time profoundly ignorant and foolish.

The “grave responsibility” which is said to be “attached to scepticism and unbelief” weighs heavily on many an honest doubter; and yet, as a rational being, man must be as accountable for his belief as for his disbelief. A man may neglect and he may misuse God’s gifts, but he can no more avoid the loss attendant upon the neglect of his

endowments, than he can escape the penalty involved in their misuse. As an eminent scientist has well said—"It is possible to purchase intellectual peace at the price of intellectual death."

Of those who teach the dreadful doctrines of "a cursed world," "a perverted reason," the eternal happiness of a selected few, and the everlasting torments of a large majority of their fellow-creatures, there is nothing to be said. If they so believe, they must so teach! But in common fairness they may be asked not to *misrepresent* the position and arguments of those, who, from the force of honest convictions, are compelled to dissent from these views.

The object contemplated in the publication of this little volume will be secured, if inquiry into these matters be stimulated, and if the book to any extent helps forward the enfranchisement of man's intellectual faculties—the first and essential step in his progressive attainment of truth. To those who are free enough to think and examine for themselves, these Essays are respectfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

DORKING, *February, 1879.*

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THE
Philosophy of Evil and Suffering.

"I form the light and create darkness : I make peace and create evil : I the Lord do all these things."—ISAIAH xlvi. 7.

It is impossible for a reflective mind to contemplate the wonders of creation without feelings of awe and admiration at the manifestations of wisdom and power displayed in its marvellous adaptations and developments. The beauty, the grandeur, the beneficence, that meet us at every turn, speak of Intelligence and Design. The Power that governs the varied phenomena of nature is apparently unlimited. Our conceptions of this Power will depend either upon the theological education we have received, or upon the deductions of our reasoning faculties from the phenomena and experiences of earth-life. Starting from premisses which to an extent must be hypothetical, we proceed to deduce certain principles which appear to underlie the mysterious phenomena of Evil and Suffering.

Almost all religious minds will admit the following propositions : it is therefore not intended in this paper to discuss them :—

1. That there is One, self-existent, conscious Intelligence, almighty in Power and perfect in Goodness, whom we call God, from whom all that *is* emanates.
 2. That man is an embodied intelligence, limited in power and imperfect in goodness.
 3. That man is free to the extent of his power.
 4. That man survives the change we call death.
 5. That by far the larger portion of human experiences are pleasurable.
 6. That a very large proportion of Evil and Suffering may be traced to ignorance, and to errors arising therefrom.*
-

* Some of these propositions are, nevertheless, disallowed by undoubtedly earnest truth-seekers, to whose objections the author would suggest the following reflections :—

Prop. 1. The impossibility of accounting for consciousness without a *conscious* cause. To suppose that consciousness can result from unconscious matter is to suppose an effect transcending the nature of its cause.

Prop. 3. The fact, attested by universal consciousness, of the freedom of man to think and to act to the extent of his power. Absolute freedom is possible only to The Absolute.

Prop. 4. If, after the death of the body, man ceases to exist, the

With the rejection of so-called infallible revelations, the proofs we have of a life after death are at present not acknowledged as scientifically conclusive. The universality of the feeling in favour of immortality may be regarded as a spiritual instinct. The feeling, however, is not altogether one of intuition, but rests upon a logical necessity, arising out of the utter impossibility of reconciling the experiences of life with the existence of a Ruling Power of infinite intelligence and goodness, except upon some such hypothesis.

A thoughtful mind can hardly rest satisfied with a negation. When, from the force of honest convictions, men are compelled to reject any particular account of the origin of Evil and Suffering, they are still pressed with the necessity of forming some theory to supply the void thereby occasioned. The facts are too painfully self-evident to be overlooked in any system of philosophy men may consciously or unconsciously entertain. With a profound conviction of the impossibility of any human faculties

question of the being of God, although speculatively interesting, is not important.

Prop. 5. That the pleasures exceed the pains of life, must be left to the individual judgment. The appeal may rest there.

being able to compass the mind of Omnipotence, we would, with all reverence, use the powers given us in endeavouring to discover some beneficent purposes which Evil and Suffering may serve in the Divine economy.

Our conceptions of Deity will ever be the reflex of our ideas of perfection. The embodiment of all that is powerful, holy, righteous, and good, is man's highest conception of *God*; and, wherever these attributes culminate in a high degree in any human being, that being becomes man's best representation or manifestation of Deity. The immeasurable distance between the finite representation and the infinite reality must, however, never be overlooked. Nature, in all its varied phenomena, is a manifestation of the Mind of *God*. The laws that govern creation are the expressions of the Divine Will. Motion, life, sensation, and intelligence, are exhibitions of God's wisdom and power. These manifestations are probably all that man can know of his Creator in the present state of existence.

It is impossible to suppose that the creation of the universe and all that it contains is purposeless, or that creation can fail to glorify its Creator. If

the glory of God be the object of creation, it follows that a Being of infinite power and wisdom must, of necessity, adopt the *best* means for the attainment of His purpose. May we now, without irreverence or presumption, assume *a necessity even to Deity?* From the constitution of our nature, we are justified, I think, in saying that, according to finite conceptions, even Deity could not possibly be glorified by intelligences who were not *free* to give or withhold their homage and affections. We have no faculties for perceiving how Infinite Intelligence could be satisfied with aught less than the *spontaneous* love and worship of His own intelligent creatures. Here, then, in the free will of man, appears to be the key which unlocks many of the mysteries attached to the presence of Evil and Suffering in a world created and governed by supreme Love and Intelligence.

We postulate, then, the love of the creature as the desire of the Creator; and, if this hypothesis be correct, it follows, that the free will of the creature is an indispensable condition to the spontaneity and perfection of that love. If this be allowed, we may be said to have arrived at the conception of an adequate *purpose* in Creation—viz., the gene-

ration, development, and education of intelligences capable of perceiving, appreciating, and enjoying, by the spontaneous efforts of their own free will, the love of their Creator. In this way we may regard the Creator as providing an outlet for the overflowing warmth of His love, in the creation of individualised intelligences capable of glorifying their Divine Author, in the appreciation and enjoyment of the endless manifestations of His perfections. On our hypothesis, it is necessary that the will of man, though under laws, should be absolutely free to the extent of his power; and experience proves the truth of this position. Hence arises the necessity for an education, and this brings us to the consideration of the *plan* by which the Creator, as we conceive, is accomplishing His divine purpose.

In considering the phenomena of earth-experiences we naturally turn our attention first to the material universe in which we find ourselves, and which, from our point of view, is regarded as the projection of the mind of God into the plane of action, resulting (possibly, through the condensation of spiritual principles, by a process incomprehensible by us) in the atoms out of which the Universe

has been developed. These atoms, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, fulfil, by chemical and other changes, involving concentrations, combinations, and separations, the will of Him from whom they emanated. The constant influx of the Eternal Spirit into these atomic condensations, called matter, appears to give rise to the dualism of life and death, good and evil, which we see throughout Nature.*

The action and reaction of this dualism may be regarded as the pulsation of the heart of Deity, producing and upholding at its every beat the varied phenomena of mind and matter ; and thus is evolved, in a perpetual series of progressive and ascending degrees, the endless variety of atomic combinations or organisms of which the Universe, with its varied productions, is composed ; each attracting that which it needs and is capable of receiving from the fountain of Universal Spirit ; the only limit being capacity, the only condition

* "In the divine order," says Emerson, "intellect is primary Nature secondary. It is the memory of the mind. That which once existed in intellect as pure law has now taken a body as nature. It existed already in the mind in solution : now it has been precipitated, and the bright sediment is the world."

receptivity. Thus, from the most rudimentary atomic combinations to the most refined human organism, all draw from the same illimitable source that which they are capable of receiving and appropriating ; and this by laws which are immutable, because infinitely wise.

Inanimate Nature thus derives the Motion by which all its changes and developments are effected ; this is the character of its receptivity, and this it attracts from the energy of the Divine Spirit, which fills all that is. The vegetable kingdom, by virtue of its advanced organization, in addition to Motion, is receptive of the higher form of energy called Life ; and to the extent of its capacity, is filled from the same Divine source. The animal kingdom, embracing the properties of the lower organizations, advances a step higher in its receptive capacity, and attracts to itself Sensation, answering to the instinctive faculties, enabling it to fulfil its part in the Divine drama of life : whilst, from the same inexhaustible source, in the progress of development (or order of creation), the human organism, in all its endless varieties, attracts to itself, in addition to the faculties possessed by the lower organisms, all those spiritual powers of thought and

ratiocination which constitute man a rational being—an embryo Spirit; having, compared with the animal world, increased perceptive powers and a receptive capacity for higher manifestations of the Divine intelligence.*

From the reception of this intelligent principle by the refined human organism, arises that which constitutes the difference between the human and animal kingdoms; a difference not so much in kind

* The following extracts are given as showing the thoughts of other minds on this subject :—

“Such idea as I have been able to form of the *rationale* of Immortality is, that Life—vegetative, animated, conscious, and self-conscious—forms a series of evolutions, not merely in the sense of a higher and more elaborate organization, but of a subtler essence—a series of sheaths out of which finer and finer shoots grow successively, till at last comes the Flower of full consciousness, into whose heart the Divine Sun pours His beams directly, and wherein is formed a Seed which does not perish when the petals fall into the dust.”—FRANCES POWER COBBE.

“Even if we admit the Darwinian theory of man’s physical origin, it must be felt that with him, in virtue of his intelligence, a new and nobler existence dawns upon the world. . . . Thought, spirit, free volition, with dominant sway over all lower life, here come into view. The *hiatus* can only be explained by the statement of the Sacred Records that into this excelling creature—the archetype and ideal exemplar, towards which vertebrated animals had been aspiring through so many ages, the summary and mirror of the whole lower creation—God breathed the breath of a new and nobler life.”—R. P. DOWNES.

as degree—*i.e.*, enlarged perceptive powers, more refined susceptibilities, and a more acute sensitiveness, enabling man, by the exercise of these improved faculties, to acquire a knowledge of the constitution of his nature and the laws that govern it. From an intuitive or emotional feeling, arising out of the development of the intellectual faculties, originated, most probably, man's first conception of a Creator or God. As these increased powers of perception and ratiocination are evolved, the moral sense becomes developed, and a knowledge of what is not inaptly termed good and evil, with its attendant responsibilities, is attained. Thus, the first rays of light from the Divine Intelligence break through the dark clouds of man's animal nature (dark by comparison only), producing within him a consciousness, to an extent, of the dualism of that nature, and a recognition, to an extent, of the will of the Divine Spirit “in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being.”

The light of the Divine Spirit once recognised, Conscience may be said to be formed; and, however dimly this light may be discerned during the process of intellectual development, to that extent, and that extent only, is man responsible to God for

the action of his will. Thus arises the conflict between so-called Good and Evil—the higher and the lower good—the flesh and the spirit. This conflict originates in the dualism of our nature, educating us by its action and reaction, through and by ourselves, in the wise order of Providence, into the perception of that which alone can make us intelligent, wise, good, and happy—*i.e.*, The knowledge and love of God.

The active recognition of the spiritual character of this warfare between the lower and higher natures, of which man, as an entity, is a compound, may be well defined as being “born again of the Spirit.” It brings man into conscious contact with the Divine Spirit, and man perceives, as of himself, the will of God in the eternal principles of love and righteousness, which are the points of universal agreement between men of every creed. And here, as ever in nature, for God is absolutely impartial, the conditions of receptivity are dependent upon the capacity of the organism and the direction of the will. Experience testifies to the fact that, if the light of the Divine Spirit is actively lived out, the capacity to receive further light (all irrational influences apart) is correspond-

ingly increased, and this quite independent of creeds or views which, when not the result of personal thought and investigation, are dependent mainly upon educational influences.

When the will of man is in harmony with the will of God, there is peace, no matter what the stage of intellectual development, or what theological views its possessor has imbibed. If, on the other hand, the voice of Conscience is disregarded, then the light of the Spirit becomes obscured, but not extinguished. When once the spirit of man has perceived the will of God, he is under law, and can no longer shield himself under the plea of ignorance. Man may, from ignorance, err and suffer; but if his conscience reproach him not, he cannot be said to *sin*. The silent monitor, once recognised, ever remains a witness and an accuser. In the torments of this inward self-condemnation and remorse may be traced the chastening of a Father's love, educating in suffering the will of His wayward and erring child.

The more we search into the phenomena of nature, the more impressed do we become with the fixity of the laws that govern its every change, and the marvellous adaptation of means to ends,

This produces in the observant mind a conviction amounting to absolute certainty that the wisdom and beneficence here displayed cannot be lacking in the higher phenomena of human life and destiny. That the Creator is absolutely impartial in His government of the world, is to the reflective mind so obvious, that it is needless to dwell upon the fact. Were it not so, all science would be at fault, and wise men would lose hope if once it could be proved that the acts of God are capricious. On the contrary, the sun shines and the rain falls on the evil and the good alike. If this be so, and if it be allowed that all which emanates from the hands of Infinite Wisdom must of necessity be perfectly adapted to the purpose it is intended to fulfil, we are justified in regarding the world in which we live, with all the varied experiences of humanity, as the best school for the development and education of free intelligences, who are to work out their own endlessly diversified individualities (which in itself we conceive to be a great source of happiness), and develop by and through their individual and combined efforts the inherent possibilities of their nature.

Broken laws fail to explain the *whole* of the

mystery of Evil and Suffering, as is evident in accidents from natural phenomena, and the inevitable decay of the organism, with its attendant weaknesses and ailments. In some way, Evil and Suffering are necessary accompaniments to progress. Why it is so we do not know ; but if we are able to discover love and wisdom in the mental sufferings and remorse attending the violation of those moral laws which are revealed to all in whom conscience is formed, we are justified in concluding that the lower form of physical suffering is also the best accomplishment of the Divine ends.

Where the intellect is undeveloped, or the conscience seared by the vacillation of the human will, producing a tendency to physical disorganization or mental retrogression, we can conceive how beneficent may be, and probably is, human sensitiveness to pain. The experience of pain leads to the investigation of its cause, and this tends to reflection, and ultimates in knowledge of a physical and mental character, the benefit of which, in the process of human education, is incalculable. This knowledge is cumulative ; and, when men are free enough to think and investigate for themselves, and to live in harmony with the Divine laws, pro-

gressively unfolded to the earnest searchers after Truth, then may the first victory over Evil and Suffering be said to be won.

As, in the evolution of the world, physical convulsions and disasters are the means by which, in the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, progress, order, and beauty are attained, so, in the development and education of mind, does it seem a necessity that human effort should be provoked by convulsions and catastrophes, which compel observation, reflection, and effort.* Thus considered, Evil and Suffering appear as necessary aids to man, in provoking efforts which an atmosphere of ease and security would most assuredly discourage. Hence, while, on the one hand, the love of the Creator is displayed in providing a series of ever-advancing motives for man's progressive aspirations, so, on the other hand, God's wisdom is equally displayed in providing, by laws that may appear harsh and cruel, those necessary incentives to action and effort by attention to which man's health, progress, and happiness are assuredly to be attained.

* "The law of growth," says a recent writer, "is this, that all progress is preceded by calamity, that all improvement is based upon defect."

Evil—that is, lower good—and Suffering are the inseparable conditions of sensitive organic life. Without the aids of Evil and Suffering we are unable to conceive any possible means by which man, as a free agent, could have attained to the higher good, or could have apprehended truth and goodness. Evil and Suffering are the levers by which God moves the world.

We are apt to overlook the compensatory nature of the laws that prevail in connexion with Evil and Suffering. The undeveloped man has pleasures unappreciated by the man of refinement. The hardships he is thought to endure are more apparent than real, and his wants are comparatively few. The anxieties attending material prosperity, the nervous susceptibilities of the cultured intellect,

"Can God *make* a good man or a good race of responsible moral beings? I say No. He must *grow* them. *A fortiori*, He cannot make a perfectly happy man or race of moral beings. But God can make a free agent. He can bestow on a finite creature a free will and conscience. That is the most marvellous of all things God can do. The heavens and all the host of them are a paltry work compared with that. The present order will work itself out in spite of all the errors and sins of the growing race of moral beings into what is best, happiest, and hopefulest for all; and all will yet adore the wisdom, love, and rigorous equal justice which made them all."—Rev. T. P. KIRKMAN, the Author of "*Philosophy without Assumptions*."

and the acute sensitiveness to pain of the refined organism, are absent to a great extent in the ignorant and undeveloped. The so-called evil man, whilst lacking the power of appreciating and enjoying the higher pleasures attendant upon a perception and appreciation of the higher good, is nevertheless compensated to a degree seldom duly estimated, in the enjoyment he derives from the gratification of the appetites of his lower nature. On the other hand, it must be allowed that the finest, the noblest, and the holiest men this world has produced, have been moulded and purified in the furnaces of affliction and suffering.

How could man know aught of sympathy and love, were it not for sorrow and suffering which draw them out? How could man appreciate the beautiful as beauty, if there were nothing in the shape of contrast to guide him to recognise it? It appears impossible that self-educated free intelligences could ever have attained to a knowledge of virtue, pleasure, peace, knowledge, and truth, without coming into contact with their opposites, vice, pain, strife, ignorance, and error. The one is learned by and through contact with the other. Thus, the so-called evils of life may truly be looked

upon as lower goods. Again, the good of one generation has been the evil of the next. The good of the ancient Hebrews was to destroy their enemies. The good of Jesus was to love them. By far the larger portion of the human race are still under the influence of the evil (lower good), and desire to destroy their enemies. The time will probably come when the religion of Jesus and other noble reformers will be understood, and the higher good they advocated be actively displayed by the enlightened governments of a civilised world.

The principle of selfishness, inherent in sentient life, is an absolute necessity to its progress, and affords an apt illustration of the truth of the proposition that all so-called evil may be regarded as undeveloped good. Selfishness, born of sensation, generates desire, desire provokes action, action stimulates thought, and the exercise of thought (observation and reflection) develops intelligence. Indigenous to the soil of intelligence are those spiritual faculties or perceptions which correspond to the moral sense, in the exercise of which man inspires eternal principles from the all-pervading Spirit of Deity. The evolution and cultivation of these spiritual faculties appear to be at once the

object and business of life. Man thus learns by and through the selfishness of his animal nature, to perceive, by comparison, the higher good of disinterested unselfishness or love in its highest (spiritual) sense.

Man is, therefore, born in ignorance, and developed gradually from the lower good to the higher, that he may learn for himself, through the experiences of life, which are alternately painful and pleasurable, of his own free will to choose the higher and forsake the lower good. The evils and sufferings of life from this point of view may be truly and intelligently regarded as beneficent necessities, through and by which man is enabled to perceive God—first, in His works—then, in the operation of His laws, evidences of His will—and, finally, rise to the power of appreciating and enjoying the endless manifestations of the Divine love and perfections. If we can thus trace, with our present limited capacities and knowledge, evidences of wisdom and goodness in the so-called evils and sufferings of humanity, constituting a beneficent necessity in the development and education of free intelligences, we may reasonably infer that the sufferings of the animal kingdom are neither vindictive

nor purposeless. We are here more in the dark, from the fact of our being unable to enter into the experiences of the animal creation, or to gauge their sensitiveness to pleasure or pain. With animals, as with man, the *individual* amount of suffering can only be fairly reckoned in the account; and again, the term of suffering must certainly not be regarded without reference to the pleasure of existence. In the case of slaughtered animals, or those who are the victims of beasts of prey, they probably have none of those sufferings by suspense and anticipation which must be far greater than the sudden, unexpected, and, perhaps, unconscious separation of life from the organism. In addition to this, from the lack of sensitiveness in the organisms themselves, the sufferings of animals may possibly be reduced to the minimum. The laws relating to the correlation of mind and matter (if God be impartial) are compensatory. The capacity for enjoyment is co-extensive with the sensitiveness to pain; hence, the more refined and complex the organism the greater the capacity for pleasure, the more sensitive is it to pain. On the other hand, the lower and simpler the organic combination, the less acutely it experiences either

pleasure or pain. Our ignorance as to the experiences and destiny of the lower kingdoms makes it more difficult for us to trace a cause for their undoubted sufferings; but that there is no suffering without a reason, a purpose, and a compensation, is shown to us by those beneficent results of suffering we are enabled to trace in the kingdom to which we belong.

To sum up our thoughts. It appears that all creation derives from the Divine Spirit, who upholds and governs it, that which it is adapted to receive and appropriate in order to fulfil its destiny. Man, an intelligent individuality, derives from the Divine Energy which fills the universe, that Life which the condition of his animal organization enables him to receive and appropriate; and, from the Divine Intelligence, that Light which from his condition physically, mentally, and morally, he is capable of receiving and appropriating. Physical conditions are dependent upon the bodily organism which, though capable of considerable modification and improvement by the action of man's free will, nevertheless, to an extent, retains its inherent individuality. This involves an endless variety of receptive capacities, a wise and beneficent ar-

rangement, contributing greatly to human happiness. The condition of mental receptivity depends upon the degree of intellectual development and mental culture, the extent of a man's knowledge, and the perfect freedom he enjoys to observe, reflect, and investigate. The condition of man's moral receptivity is dependent upon the action of his Will. When a man is honestly living out his conscientious convictions as to what is good and true, that man (with perfect intellectual freedom) must of necessity be progressing in the knowledge and love of his Creator; and, where this is combined with a healthy organism, we are justified in regarding that man as possessing as much of human happiness as humanity is capable of enjoying. Thus, simply stated:—We have what we are capable of receiving, and are what we make ourselves. The incomprehensible Intelligence, whom we call *God*, governs His creation by laws that are infinitely wise. The apparent contradictions and inexplicable expedients that appear to be adopted in the evolution of a world and the development of individualised intelligences are the conditions by which the immutable laws of God are transforming a nebula of chaotic Atoms into a World of beauty, grandeur,

and intelligence, in whose womb are generated, and on whose bosom are developed, educated, and purified, immortal spirit-entities, who, in the furnaces of affliction and suffering, and in the warfare against the propensities and passions of their lower nature, are made thereby meet to glorify their Creator in an active obedience to His will, in which is involved their own everlasting happiness.

If this is clear to us, it follows that the sufferings of the Animal Kingdom are also the results of wise and beneficent laws, employing apparently cruel agents in the accomplishment of the most benevolent ends. Under any circumstances, the difficulties are enormously increased on the theory of Evil and Suffering being the result of a single act of disobedience committed in the infancy of the race.*

Earth-life thus appears to be the first chapter in a book the pages of which are endless, the theme of which is the wisdom, power, and goodness of

* The sincere evangelical Christian believes that the Evils and Sufferings of men and animals, and the natural dissolution of living organisms, are all the results of "The Fall"; that death leads to an eternity of misery for all who are unable intellectually to apprehend and consciously to lay hold of such doctrines as "The Trinity" and "The Atonement." It must be left to the reason and conscience of intelligent men to judge on which side the balance of probability lies.

God, and its teachings the rudimentary principles of Spirit existence. To attain a knowledge of these principles appears to be the work of every individual soul, and the means best adapted to the purpose are, in the wisdom of God, the experiences incidental to this stage of existence. In the action and reaction of God's immutable laws (material and spiritual) men are ever learning lessons, the full value of which, like children at school, they will realise in after-life.

In a recent essay by Moncure D. Conway on "Theism, Atheism, and the Problem of Evil," he says,—“Seeing so much, we remember that we have come to it only very gradually. We know that the human mind once saw disorder in many regions where it now sees order; that knowledge reveals good in many things which ignorance held altogether evil, consequently we are warranted in believing that more and more experience, and increasing knowledge, will make clear the surrounding realm of darkness.” “If we could now by a word remove from the world all that has been done for it by pain and evil, we should behold man relapsing from the height he has won by struggle with unfriendly elements and influences, falling

back from point to point, losing one after another the energies gained by mastering evil, and sinking through all the stages of retrogression to some miserable primal form too insignificant to be attacked, too nerveless to suffer." . . . " But even now this darkness rests only upon the final cause of evil, that is, upon the inquiry why the ends secured by evil were not reached by a more merciful method. If, in reply to the question, Why is not the universe painless? we must answer, We do not know; in reply to the question, What good end does evil serve? we may answer, We know very well."

I am here reminded of a question put to a distressed parent by a little girl during a prolonged and painful illness, "Why does Maggie suffer so?" The parent was wise consequently silent. Religion may tranquillise, intuition whisper hope, and philosophy produce resignation; but reason is here out of its depth. We can but say,—we do not know. Theories are propounded, and it is impossible for thoughtful men, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid entertaining some views with regard to the presence of Evil and Suffering in a world created by Infinite Wisdom, governed by Infinite Love, and

upheld by Infinite Power ; but so long as we are under the influence of reason, and alive to the dictates of conscience, we cannot rest satisfied with any explanation of this mysterious phenomenon which involves the contradiction of the highest and noblest impulses of our nature, or the absence of those principles of righteousness and justice which are the intuitions of the civilised conscience.

Conscience:

ITS PLACE AND FUNCTION.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man."—ACTS xxiv. 16.

IN the columns of *The Times* we frequently meet with a paragraph headed "Conscience Money," in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer acknowledges the receipt of various sums on account of unpaid Income Tax. The heading of this paragraph fairly indicates the conventional meaning attached to the word "conscience." In some of these cases, at least, we should be justified in assuming that the motive actuating the sender was the simple desire to do the right—that the man was acting from principle. We have here an illustration of an apprehended principle in action. The man is impressed with a *feeling* that he ought to pay this money, and his desire to do the right constitutes his motive to action. There is thus a principle: the apprehension and application of a principle, and a motive to

action. A little thought on these points may possibly show the place and function of Conscience.

The principle of LOVE, which includes Righteousness, is Divine. It is the attribute of Deity ; the pervading influence from the source of all life and thought. It is well called LIGHT, "the inner light," "the indwelling spirit," "the silent monitor," "the still small voice." It is, indeed, *the Light of Love*—the light of the Divine Intelligence, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; the impress of the Creator's nature; the image of God reflected on the soul of man. It is the voice of Deity, and it says *Do the right*.

The apprehension of this light is instinctive—an emotional perception. It is the instinct of intelligence, Conscience, an infallible guide to virtue and goodness, but no test of the truth of our beliefs. The light within us does not work for us, but in us. It does not teach us intellectual truth, but presents to our apprehension a principle of love and goodness capable of universal application. This principle is perceived and externalised in harmony with the physical, mental, and moral conditions of humanity. It is quite possible for a man to be wholly under

the influence of this Divine principle, and yet to be profoundly ignorant and superstitious. When this fact is apprehended in its full significance, men will no longer squabble over creeds and rituals.

In its capacity for receiving impressions, the human soul* may be compared to a sensitised photographic plate. In photography, the quality of the impression is dependent upon the conditions of the plate. The organic differences of the human brain may be regarded as conditioning the receptive capacity of the soul. The child commences existence knowing nothing. Its soul is a conditioned *tabula rasa*. It receives its first impressions from sensations. These sensations produce general and particular impressions—general, in so far as they are common to mankind, and particular to the extent of organic variation. Leaving the general impressions produced by sensations common to sen-

* By soul is here meant, the seat of the emotional in man—the individual, percipient Ego. The impressional part of man's nature—whatever that may be—is regarded as distinct from the mind which reasons upon the impressions received. It may be, however, that the intellectual and emotional in man are but different modes of mental action, and that there exists but the dualism of Mind and Matter. And, again, these may possibly be resolvable into Mind alone, of which Matter is the outcome, or manifestation.

tient life, we confine our attention to what appears to be the mode of progress in each man's intellectual and moral development.

Starting, then, with a conception of the human soul as a *tabula rasa*, conditioned by the size or quality of the brain, and vitalised or sensitised by an inherent life-force (derived either immediately from its parents, or intermediately from the attraction of this force from the soul's surroundings, through the inherited properties of its material organism), we may regard man as an embodied individuality, inheriting a conditioned capacity for receiving and perceiving impressions. Man, at any given point in his existence, may be said to be the totality of his impressions. What he has been taught by others; observed, compared, and reflected upon for himself; the sum total of these experiences forms the conscious entity we call Man. In life, and if he exist after the change we call death, man is what he *knows*. He may be clothed upon with a new body, adapted to a world of new experiences, but *the man* remains, metaphysically, the totality of his impressions—the result of his conscious experiences in Earth-life. Man thus perceives, compares, and reflects. It is in the process of

mental development that the moral sense is evolved, and man becomes conscious of impressions of a more occult nature. He *feels* a Power above and beyond his own, and out of this emotion arises a sense of awe, which, apprehended by the intelligence, develops Reverence, and a desire to worship that Power. In the same way man *feels* he should do the right. It is this emotion which leads to the desire for righteousness, justice, reciprocity. The perception of an inner principle, in seeming antagonism to the selfishness and sensuality of a lower nature, affords a field for the education of the *will*; and it is here the faculty of Conscience is developed. The intellectual, like the physical, instincts may be disregarded. Man *may* resist their appeal. The responsibility of so doing is commensurate with the individual power of perceiving and appreciating their force and authority. We must be very careful, however, to distinguish between righteousness as a *principle*, and right in action—between God's light, and man's perception of that light.* Great has been the misery

* "Plutarch, or one who evidently expresses his sentiments, replies very much as at this day, that the enthusiasm, though most

occasioned by man failing to perceive this distinction. The *principle* of Righteousness is absolute. It is a ray of Divine light which illumines the soul of every intelligent being.* Right in *action* is man's application of this Divine principle to his life and conduct. The application of an inner principle to man's life and conduct demands the exercise of his mental faculties. This process is educational, leading to conceptions of higher and lower standards of right in action—right and wrong, good and evil. Obedience to the higher standard we call morality. Man's judgment as to the application of this Divine principle will be wise

truly a divine afflatus and influence, yet has human souls for the sphere of its operation, and will take much of its outward form and fashion from these; that the agitation of the spirit is divine, but that much after this is human, and is the result of the varying condition of different souls, or of the same at different times."—ARCHBISHOP TRENCH's "Plutarch."

* The interrelation and interaction of the laws governing mental and physical phenomena conclusively prove (to the writer) an unity of will—the supreme attribute of Personality—in the mind manifested in nature, leading necessarily to the inference that there exists One Absolute Intelligence, from whom all finite intelligences are derived. Human intelligence is therefore absolute in its nature. This view appears to suggest the true solution of the free will difficulty, inasmuch as it leaves man's will *free* in essence, although conditioned, in manifestation, by the laws of his being, of *necessity*.

and unwise in the exact ratio of his knowledge, by which is meant *true* knowledge—*i.e.*, the knowledge of the constitution of his nature, physically, mentally, and morally; the knowledge of natural phenomena, and the laws by which they are governed. If a man's will be towards “the Light,” then the greater his knowledge—all irrational influences apart—the nearer will he approach in action to that absolute right (in principle), which is Truth, in its moral significance.

A man of discretion and wisdom—the outcome of knowledge—influenced by an intelligent apprehension of the Divine light, will approach as near to the Absolute Right as is possible to imperfect intelligences. Thus, the intelligent apprehension of an intuited moral principle is the birth of Conscience; to preside over the secret spring of man's actions is the function of this new-born faculty. With the *intelligent* apprehension of this principle commences man's moral responsibility; he disregards it at his peril.

Conscience is generally (but, in the writer's view, erroneously) regarded as the exercise of the mental faculty of judgment on moral questions. In this sense the exercise of conscience is not necessarily

confined to questions of morality. A man believes certain propositions or asserted statements of fact, *conscientiously*, because he is impressed they are true. How or why a man is thus impressed, does not affect the question. If the totality of a man's impressions be in favour of their truth, to that extent he conscientiously believes them, and must (if he wills to follow the "Inner Light") adapt his conduct to his belief. To alter a man's conscience, you must enlighten his mind, increase his knowledge; but if from any cause he is unable to think for himself, the task is (perhaps, desirably) hopeless. Further, using the word as expressing man's moral judgments, we may say that the consciences of religious and cultivated Englishmen, but a few years ago, approved of hanging men for sheep-stealing, and of burning so-called witches. We are justified in believing that the laws of that day fairly represented what the nation believed *to be right*. It may be asked to what are we to attribute the change in the national conscience on these points? Is it not to a growth in intellectual apprehension and moral culture—a perception of a higher application of *the same principle* which influenced the former (now perceived to be) erroneous

judgment, such change being the outcome of increased knowledge ?

The principle of *growth* in man's moral judgments being admitted, it appears difficult to deny its operation in the sphere of his religious beliefs.

If these views be sound, it follows that a man's conscientious convictions on questions of belief are no proof to others of the truth of his conclusions. A man is bound to follow his convictions ; but to suppose that conflicting conscientious lines of moral action, or self-refuting theological beliefs, can be equally true, is, of course, absurd. A Mahomedan has been led—under no matter what influences—to abjure Mahomedanism and embrace Christianity. Christians would not think of condemning the man for his change of belief. True ; but what is said of the Christian who conscientiously arrives at the conclusion, that many of the dogmas of Christianity are untenable ? “ Unbelief is sin,” cries the dogmatist, and then proceeds to point out that that want of faith which he commended in the Mahomedan, in the Christian's case will inevitably lead to “ eternal torments.” Where is the common sense of such teachings, to say nothing of logic ? The men are both, if they are conscientious, under the

influence of a Divine afflatus or principle. They perceive they must do the right, and are learning what *is* right. Cease, ye priests (mahomedan and christian) to anathematise the one or the other.

Let reason have its full sway.* The Creator has endowed men with mental facultes, which, if allowed free scope, will in time enable them rightly to apply that divine principle of Righteousness which He has impressed upon their souls. There is no hurry. We shall not all think alike until our organisms are constructed alike, and we are subjected to precisely the same combinations of circumstances and influences. Most christians believe the Bible to be the infallible Word of God. The mahomedan believes the Koran to be inspired, and Mahomet to have been a prophet of God. The hindoo believes Krishna to have been an incarna-

* "The God of Nature has given every man his own reason to be the judge of evidence to himself in particular, and to direct his assent in all things about which he is called to judge; and even the matters of revelation are to be believed by us, because our reason pronounces the revelation to be true. Therefore, the Great God will not, or cannot, in any instance, require us to assent to anything without reasonable or sufficient evidence; nor to believe any proposition more strongly than what our evidence for it will support."—*The Improvement of the Mind.*. DR. ISAAC WATTS.

tion of Deity. The buddhist believes in Buddha. It cannot be urged that these varied and conflicting beliefs are the results of inward divine teaching. On the other hand, will not believers in all these creeds admit the presence of a "Light within," and acknowledge the pressure of a principle of righteousness common to all beliefs? If this be so, is not the universality of testimony in favour of this inner divine principle the strongest evidence of its being the voice of the Universal Father? whilst the varied and conflicting theological conceptions of mankind afford ample proof of their human origin. It is impossible to read that beautiful hymn of Dr. Newman's,* written, it is said, shortly before he entered the Roman Communion, without feeling

* Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead Thou me on ;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
 Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
 The distant scene ; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
 Shouldst lead me on ;
I loved to choose and see my path ; but now
 Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
 Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years.

assured of the integrity of the writer's desire for divine guidance. It may be asked, Was the step Dr. Newman then contemplated, and has since taken, the result of the direct teaching of the Divine Spirit? The answer will probably depend upon a man's theological views. It is not here denied that our impressions are at times due to spiritual influences. It may be that the soul of man is capable of receiving impressions from spiritual sources. Disembodied spirits may, under certain conditions, and probably have, throughout the world's history, impressed the souls of those in the body. The mistake has been in regarding such impressions as infallible. Man would, indeed, be cast upon the ocean of life without compass or rudder were he left without a standard whereby to judge of his impressions. To the tribunal of Reason must *all* impressions be submitted and there adjudicated upon under the reflected light of an

So long Thy Power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,—
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

inner Absolute Principle.* Intellectual freedom, combined with an intelligent apprehension of the Divine light within, will inevitably lead to the attainment of as much of truth as a man, *at the time*, is capable of receiving. Men are apt to confound intellectual truth† with goodness. Our views and conceptions on theological subjects are, as we believe, of little moment compared with a life of virtue and unselfish love,—the living out the light of the Divine Spirit within, the fruits of which are justice, reciprocity, love. This alone can afford rational satisfaction to intelligent beings, and is, after all, the only source of true peace to men of all creeds. When the light of this world wanes, and the brighter light of a higher life breaks upon the soul, the important question then will be, not “What have I believed?” but, “What have I done or left undone?”

* “Human reason is a reflex of Divine reason, a finite type of the Eternal Logos, or it could never understand the phenomena of experiential life and organisation.”—*Organic Philosophy (Biology)*. DOHERTY.

† Logic is the divine re-agent for testing the truth of our intellectual beliefs.

N O T E.

THE following Essay is the offspring of a theological controversy with a Nonconformist minister, to whom the writer had lent a volume of Dr. Colenso's sermons. The author prefers it appearing in its original epistolary form.

Part I. gives some of the reasons which have led the writer to reject, as untrue, the doctrine of "The plenary inspiration of the Bible."

Part II. proceeds to indicate what remains if the Bible cannot be regarded as the infallible Word of God.

Religion and Dogma.

P A R T I.

"Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good."—I THESS. v. 21.

YOUR willingness to read Colenso is a gratifying indication of your appreciation of what is due to the arguments of a controversial opponent. By the time you have finished his sermons, you will, I think, come to the conclusion that he is an earnest and devout, though perhaps to your mind, a mistaken man. Here appears to be the point. Good men, whose only desire is to know God's will in order to do it, go to the same assumed infallible source, the Bible : they pray for the same Holy Spirit's guidance, and yet how different their conclusions ! One finds in it a huge sacerdotal and sacramental system of religion ; another the ordinary doctrines of the Church of England ; a third obtains from it very unorthodox conceptions ; and a fourth interprets it by the doctrine of correspondences as pro-

pounded by Swedenborg ; whilst I, and I cannot help thinking a daily increasing number, look upon the Bible as a precious volume, simply from the fact that it contains the theological views and conceptions of religious men for four thousand years. In perusing its honoured pages, we find much that comes home to our inmost convictions as inspired truth, but with the strongest evidence of the fallibility of the media through which it has been transmitted. The first class interpret, according to their conceived system, all that is not quite clear, and set about fitting it in, often with great skill and plausibility ; churchmen and dissenters follow suit (drawing the most opposite conclusions) ; whilst those, who can so far divest themselves of traditions, imbibed in their earliest days, as to read the Bible as they would any other book, will accept what appeals to their internal convictions as true, and give the same credence to narratives, improbable and absurd in themselves, as if met with in any other volume of history. By this class, stories, which are obliged to be twisted into all sorts of unnatural meanings to fit into the system of their friends, are set down as possibly belonging to the myths of antiquity. Thus, then, I take it,

the Roman Catholic makes an idol of “the Church,” you of “the Bible,” and you each prostrate your reasoning faculties before your respective shrines. I quote a passsage from a recent work by Dr. Pusey :—“I believe with my inmost will whatever the Church holds, whether I know it or not. I hope the Roman Church will not define certain stated doctrines as matters of faith; but, if the whole Church—including the Greek and Anglican Communions—were to define these or any other points ‘*de fide*,’ I should hold all further inquiry to be at an end. I have ever submitted my credenda to a power beyond myself.”

For the word *Church*, substitute *Bible*, and your positions are identical ;—one committed to what the Church teaches, however illogical or absurd, the other to all sorts of conflicting statements and mythical stories, simply because they are in the Bible. When we come to consider how much there is in the Bible that can only have been received by tradition, and then thoroughly examine the times in which this was transmitted, it is almost incredible that men, who have thus looked into the sources, can be so satisfied as to the character of the supply. Take the Apocryphal Books of the

New Testament; who can believe them? and yet it must be allowed they bear many characteristics of emanating from similar, if not the same sources as our New Testament Canon. How is it, then, that they were rejected? and by whom? It certainly was by men like ourselves; and we have no more right to assume that, when this book was rejected and that accepted as canonical, these decisions were miraculously guided, than Roman Catholics have to dogmatically assert that the decisions of the Council of 1870 were the results of God's special direction.

Where do we get our Scriptures from? In reply, I quote from a Roman Catholic divine:*

"A Council was held at Carthage in the year 397, presided over by Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage: St. Augustine was also present, and its decree was afterwards accepted by the Universal Church; when the Canon of Scripture, as given in our Catholic Bibles, was settled, once for all, when the spurious gospels and an epistle of St. Barnabas, with several other writings, were excluded; and the Epistles to

* The work from which this extract was taken has been mislaid. The author is therefore unable to refer more fully to it.

the Hebrews, the Revelations, and other Books were inserted in the Canon of the New Testament ; and most of the Books which Protestants place in the Apocrypha were inserted in the Old Testament Canon. Eusebius, who wrote before this Council, speaks of many of the Books of the New Testament as doubtful ; *but since the Council was held, and its decree accepted by the Church, there is no longer any doubt expressed as to any of the Books of the Canon of Scripture.* We leave it to our Protestant friends to find a satisfactory answer to the question—why they reject the Apocryphal Books, if they accept the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Revelations, since all these books rest on the same authority.”

I would here remark that the present canon of Scripture was undoubtedly decided upon by the votes of men. Had men voted otherwise, Christians would have believed otherwise. A majority of *Yea*s decided what was God’s infallible word ; whilst a majority of *Nay*s was sufficient to settle for ever what was not inspired.*

* The first epistle attributed to Clement of Rome is, as every one knows, of high antiquity and authority. It probably dates from the end of the first century. Jerome tells us that it was publicly read in church as authorised scripture ; it is included in the Alexandrian

It is true, as you say, "The universal conscience acknowledges that the Bible *contains* God's Word," but this is very different from asserting that it *is* God's Word. For example, does my belief in that beautiful verse, "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," depend at all upon my regarding as equally true the story of the two she-bears tearing the forty little children because they called Elisha "bald head"? and am I also compelled to believe, that, when the old man is reported as turning round and cursing them "in the name of the Lord," the Supreme Being, who made and rules the universe, had anything whatever to do with that curse?

I must confess that I see great difficulty in the way of our arriving together at anything like the same conclusions until we can agree upon a starting point. If you take the Bible as a miraculously inspired work, miraculously preserved, translated, and interpreted (by those who see through your spectacles), and I view it as an embodiment of human conceptions of the attributes of the Supreme

manuscript of the New Testament, and one may say that it was within an inch of gaining, and not undeservedly, admission into our Canon.—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Being and His dealings with His creatures—of men ever progressing in their discernment of truth, but through media tinged with the spirit of their earliest teachings, country, clime, and surroundings—from these two different starting points, our conclusions will and must be different. I should, however, deeply grieve if I were (in order to be in harmony with your views) to entertain your estimate of human nature—viz., that of “man finding his good in feeding the hell-born passions of beastly nature.” But for the supposed sanction of the Bible, you would hardly dare to remark thus upon anything emanating from the hands of Infinite Wisdom. It must be allowed that, inasmuch as man has ever been capable of erring, he has ever been imperfect; the Creator, then, is alone responsible for this imperfection; and if we really believe that God is infinitely good as well as wise, we are driven to the conclusion that this was the result of the Creator’s benevolence. I ask, then, is it not possible for even finite minds to conceive that God, by endowing man with reasoning faculties, and planting within him His own image or mind, has made it possible for man to attain to higher happiness than could ever have resulted from the creation of a sort of spirit

machine, incapable of reasoning, consequently of either erring or sinning ? Error thus appears to be one of the natural results of imperfection, whilst sin must be looked upon as a wilful violation of God's spiritual or material laws. To remove ignorance, then, the parent of misconception and superstition, is the first step in the direction of perfection—*God*—and I ask any thinking man whether it would not now be heaven upon earth, if men were to live and act up to their inmost convictions of God's will ; and whether a better acquaintance with the laws that govern the material world would not lead to the avoidance of the causes of much of the suffering and misery that humanity is subject to ?

I need hardly say that this view of sin and error removes the necessity for that mysterious doctrine of the Atonement, and points significantly to the salvation that Christ preached—the raising the fallen, enlightening the ignorant, reclaiming the erring, and bringing ourselves and them to that light which guided even Christ himself—i.e., his internal conception of the will of his Father. In this sense, he was and is, as I conceive, the Saviour of all who imbibe and follow the spirit of his teaching.

Now, let us consider the orthodox view of original sin. Of course you are committed by your mental submission to the teaching of the Bible, to one way only of accounting for the existence of sin—viz., Adam and Eve's disobedience. I, not being thus tied, can view this discord in the harmony of God's creation from other points of view, and can see how, in sorrow, sickness, and suffering, aye, even through and in spite of sin itself, the spirits of mankind are being educated for higher positions, ever progressing in the knowledge of Him, "whom to know is life eternal." This is a large and deeply interesting subject, for it is at the base of every system of theology; but a creed which involves the assumption that the nature of every infant born into this world is "hell-born," is one that I am thankful to have left for brighter and more harmonious conceptions of that great Being, Who, though incomprehensible by my finite understanding, is contemplated, worshipped, and adored in His wonderful works above, around, and within me. I must confess to having no faculties for perceiving the righteousness of affixing to me the errors or sins of Adam. I can quite understand a son inheriting, bodily and mentally, the results

of the follies, ignorances, and sins of his parents, and his being temporally an innocent sufferer from the operation of those laws which, on the whole, are calculated to promote the highest happiness of God's creatures; but that that son is responsible for entering this world under those conditions, I am as unable to believe as I am that he will not recover from their effects, in proportion as he listens to God's voice within and obeys its holy dictates.

The burden of your letter appears to be the word "Saved," which of course involves the word *Lost*. Is it possible that Infinite Wisdom could create anything that can be eternally lost? I think not. No! the wisdom, power, and goodness displayed in all round forbid the thought, be it taught by Priest or Bible. The time is, I believe, coming, when nobler conceptions of the great ruling Spirit of Creation will arise, and two words in our language will constitute our theology; one implying the principle permeating the Great God and all His works—*Love*; the other His relation to us His creatures—*Father*. When once this is received in all the simplicity with which the Great Teacher ever taught it, we shall see the utter im-

possibility of entertaining any doctrines that involve the severance of this relationship. The son may err, sin, and suffer ; he may feed himself with the husks the swine have left, and wander far away from his father's house ; but whenever the time arrives—be it in this or any succeeding stage of existence—when he sees the mistake he has made, and listens to his Father's voice, which, as I believe, can never be silent, then, if the word *Father* means anything to us, it is that, while he is yet a long way off, he will be met, forgiven, and welcomed.

You may say mine is an unsettled state. I admit, at starting, it is so. It is very difficult to divest one's self and keep clear of the superstitions and misconceptions of past ages, especially in their more recent developments, as sustained by the ignorance and prejudices of the present ; but this is certain, that I experience more comfort from, and have greater faith in, the daily increasing knowledge of the great Creator, attained in a reverent study of His works and laws, than ever I derived from the dogmas of Churches, or the blind acceptance of ancient creeds ; simply because what is thus learned is not dependent upon the opinions or views of

others, but upon my own intelligent comprehension of God's power, wisdom, and love ; and it seems to me clearer, day by day, that our happiness, here and hereafter, depends upon our living in harmony with the Creator's laws (material and spiritual) much more than upon our creeds and views, which must vary according to our physical and mental temperaments, and the circumstances of our birth, clime, education, and surroundings.

We will now approach the orthodox view of the nature of Jesus. It is stated in the Bible that Christ was the only begotten son of the Father. If this is so, it not only proves that the begotten is not the begetter, though partaking of the same nature, but also that there must have been a time when the begotten did not exist : hence the begotten cannot be God. There is no question between us as to Christ being the son of God : we are all sons ; the question is, how a son can be his own Father. Have we, I ask, any faculties for compassing so stupendous a proposition ? and does our eternal happiness depend upon our believing anything so opposed to our intelligence, simply because some passages in the Bible seem inexplicable on any other hypothesis ; or because the Apostles,

in ignorance of certain laws, material and psychological, concluded that phenomena which they did not comprehend were proofs that the Creator himself had suspended or transgressed His own laws? God does not, as I conceive, make laws and then break them. The disciples are said to be assembled in a room after Christ's death, the door being shut, when Jesus, in a body, appears. This body, I submit, could not have been material, in the sense of being flesh and blood. The body presented to Thomas, if this account be true, must have been a spiritual one, made tangible to Thomas's touch. On a similar hypothesis the angel may have been seen by Balaam, when his internal (spiritual) sight was opened. Assuming the account to be true, it does not follow that Thomas's theology was correct when he cried out in his surprise and alarm, "My Lord and my God." I know that Jesus is reported in another place to have said,—"Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have;" but this is one of the inconsistencies it appears impossible for reasoning minds to reconcile. This same body goes to heaven—to Christ's Father and our Father, Christ's God and our God—and yet we are told that "flesh and blood cannot inherit

the kingdom of heaven.”* In the account by St. John, Jesus is reported to have said to Mary—“Touch me not for I am not yet ascended,” and a few verses following he tells Thomas to come and thrust his hand into his side. Again, it is argued that none but God Himself could work the miracles that Christ did. I reply that others, before and since Christ, are said to have worked miracles. Elijah is reported to have raised the dead: and for miracles since the time of Christ, take the early Fathers, through whom our New Testament scriptures are received. I will quote one only:—Irenæus, who was contemporary with Justin Martyr, who, it is supposed, wrote his “Apology” within fifty years after the last of the Apostles, affirms that

* The Hon. R. Dale Owen, in a remarkably interesting work, “The Debatable Land,” alluding to the verse, “Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have” (Luke xxiv. 39), says, “These words are ascribed by Luke to Jesus, as having been spoken to his affrighted disciples when he appeared in the midst of them on the third day after his crucifixion. They are not given by any other Evangelist; John, who touches on the subject, merely saving that Jesus ‘showed unto them his hands and his side.’ It so happens that these words are quoted by Ignatius, one of the oldest of the Apostolic Fathers, the disciple and familiar friend of the Apostles. But, as he quotes them, there is a variance from the text in Luke, thus: ‘Handle me and see, for I am not a spirit without body’ (*daimonion asomaton*). I believe this to be the true reading.”

"all who were truly disciples of Jesus, receiving grace from him, wrought miracles in his name; some cast out devils; others had knowledge of future events, visions and prophetical sayings; others healed the sick by the imposition of hands; even the dead had been raised, and lived afterwards many years among them."

Assuming, for a moment, Christ to have been God, it follows that he could not have sinned; and, in that case, I ask where is the merit in his resisting temptation? and of what value is that resistance, as an example to us, who have no such protective power as Godhead implies? I must add, that the temptation in the wilderness, under this hypothesis, appears to me to be a solemn farce.

Take the accounts of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, and consult theologians, and you get as many explanations of this narrative as there are days in the week, finishing with Bishop Colenso, who, after alluding to the discrepancies in the word used by the tempter as reported by Matthew and Luke (fatal to the verbal accuracy of the Bible), writes as follows:—

"I say then, as most of you, I am sure, must

yourselves feel, that on the face of the facts I have mentioned, it is impossible to regard this narrative as historically true—that it is probably one of those numerous mythical additions to the real history of the life of our Lord which have been added in a later age, and were no doubt current in the time when the gospels were composed.”

In Max Müller’s Lectures on the “ Science of Religion,” he says :—

“ A knowledge of the Science of Religion is not all gain, for it entails the loss of many cherished ideas ; but the gain is immeasurably higher than the loss ; and, further, to learn the Truth, ancient thoughts must be applied to ancient words ; for instance, what we call Divine guidance, the ancients called a pillar of cloud,’ etc. etc.”

I need hardly remind you how a criticism of the Scriptures in this direction would modify, if not completely change, our traditional mode of Biblical interpretation. Thus with the Star that is supposed to have guided the Magi. Will you look into the heavens on a starlit night, and tell me whether you think it possible that any star should guide you, not only to one particular country (which I question), but to a town, yea, a house in

a town? Hence, if this be true, it must bear some other than a literal interpretation; and yet these are the things that must be believed in as literal infallible truths, on the statements of others, who themselves have received them from traditional sources, or men are set down as Infidels. Take once more the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, as taught, not by Christ himself—for I do not believe that Christ ever taught that he was God, except in the sense that we are ourselves one with Him *in spirit*. We have first of all to get at the truth of the story of the Incarnation; and assuming, for a moment, that Mary had a son without knowing a man, I ask, which was the diviner person—Adam who had no earthly parentage, but proceeded directly from Deity, or Jesus, who was born of a human mother?

I will now transcribe a passage from the Apocryphal Book of the New Testament, “The Gospel of the Birth of Mary,” chap. iv., and last verse of chap. iii. :—

“ So Anna conceived and brought forth a daughter, and, according to the angel’s command, the parents did call her name Mary.

“ And when three years were expired and the

time of her weaning complete, they brought the Virgin to the Temple of the Lord, with offerings.

“And there were about the Temple, according to the Psalms of degrees, fifteen stairs to ascend; for the Temple being built in a mountain, the altar of burnt offering which was without, could not become near but by stairs.

“The parents of the blessed Virgin and Infant Mary put her upon one of these stairs.

“But while they were putting off her clothes, in which she had travelled, and, according to custom, putting on some that were more neat and clean;

“In the meantime the Virgin of the Lord in such a manner went up all the stairs one after another, without the help of any to lead or lift her, that any one would have judged from hence that she was of perfect age.

“Thus did the Lord in the infancy of his Virgin work this extraordinary work, and evidence, by this miracle, how great she was like to be hereafter.”

Now, bear in mind, this is one of the Scriptures that had to be accepted or rejected at the time the present canonical books were decided upon; and, unless we assert the infallibility of the choosers of

the Canon of Scripture, the story of the little Virgin running upstairs comes to us with a demand upon our belief almost, if not quite, equal to the narratives of the canonical books. If intelligence may be fairly used in testing the credibility of the one story, it ought to be employed in accepting or rejecting the other. Assuming, however, the story to be true, it still leaves Jesus inheriting from his mother, according to your notions, the depravity you attach to human nature.

Here the Romish Church appears to be consistent; for seeing how illogical it is to have to admit that a clean thing can proceed from an unclean, it provides the convenient dogma of Immaculate Conception; which, it must be admitted, there are grounds for, from traditions handed down in the Apocryphal Scriptures; but, when we read what Christ himself reiterates, that he had no power of himself, that his knowledge was derivative, limited to his human comprehension of his Father's will, and that the great object of his life was to bring all men to recognise God as their Father as well as his, it appears to me that the last piercing cry said to have been uttered by our dying teacher—"My God, my God, why hast

thou forsaken me?" closes the argument against his being God.*

As to the teaching of Christ himself, I ask any truth-loving spirit to read the accounts given in the gospels, tinged as they are, evidently, with the views and possible misconceptions of the writers, to thoroughly examine, by comparing the researches of commentators and philologists, the probable sources of the four gospels (especially that attributed to St. John), and then to say on which side the evidence bears, as to whether Christ taught that he was the Supreme Being or not—in the sense of making himself equal with God. When Christ is reported to have said—"Why

* The difference between Jesus Christ and other good men appears to me to have been in the measure of the Divine Spirit he was capable of receiving. The human body of Christ was not God, it will be admitted. In what, then, did the divinity of Christ consist? The Divine Spirit which was manifested in the life and teachings of Christ constituted his divinity, and every man, as I conceive, in the measure of his receptivity, to this extent is divine. The difference is one (I speak with reverence) of quantity not quality, for there is no evidence whatever of there being more than one Divine Spirit. Those who desire fairly to weigh the evidence of Scripture on this subject, are referred to "An Examination of Liddon's Bampton Lectures on the Divinity of Christ." (Trübner & Co.) It will amply repay a thoughtful mind to read carefully both "Liddon" and his Reviewer.

allest thou me good ? there is none good but one, and that is God," if he were himself very God, it sounds very much as though he were misleading his hearers, which cannot be allowed.*

Christ is reported to have said—"I and my Father are one ;" but, shortly after, his prayer was that his disciples might be one as he was one with the Father. Spiritually understood, this is perfectly intelligible ; literally taken, it can only confuse the intellect.

When Christ taught us to pray to " Our Father which art in heaven," did he teach us to pray to himself? And when we address this prayer now, is it to Jesus Christ? and yet is it not true that Christ is gradually becoming more and more the object of christian worship, and, in some churches,

* Canon Liddon ingeniously endeavours to explain away the plain meaning of this passage by emphasising the word *thou*, thus : " Why callest *thou* me good ?" Unfortunately for this suggestion we are told by G. Vance Smith (*Bible and Popular Theology*, p. 119) that "the pronoun *thou* does not exist as a separate word in the original," and further "that it is as little prominent or emphatic as possible in a Greek sentence, being simply included or implied in the verb." "The whole emphasis," he continues, "is clearly on the two words, 'me' and 'good,' especially on the former, because of its position in the sentence. The epithet 'good' accordingly Jesus *absolutely disclaims for himself*," pointing out that it is applicable to One alone and that He is God.

to the almost total exclusion of the great Eternal Father, whom Jesus ever taught was alone to be worshipped? Perhaps our modern hymnals are the most striking illustrations of the great mistake, according to my view, christians are making; the result, as I conceive, of an assumption on the part of the early church (in ignorance and misconception I will allow), that Jesus Christ is equal to and to be worshipped as God. "Hymns Ancient and Modern" may be cited as an example of the increasing tendency to address worship to Jesus. How many of these hymns are devoted to Jesus! how few to God! There is, certainly, a sort of saving clause in the last verse of many of them, in which the Father is mentioned in connexion with the Son and Holy Spirit, but I ask, has there not been a change in this direction of late? and to whom now is the major part of prayer and praise addressed? To the Eternal Father? or to him who, it is said, came to do the will of his Father?

Two other orthodox Bible doctrines demand our attention—viz., the Trinity of Persons in the God-head, and the Resurrection of Christ's body. The first involves a conception of Deity as divisible into three distinct individualities or persons, and we are

asked to believe that, at the creation, the Trinity consulted and made man, who, by an act of disobedience, necessitated the submission of the second person of the Trinity to be cruelly murdered by his own creatures, in order to appease the wrath and satisfy the justice of the first person; leaving it inexplicable how the unity is preserved without the second and third persons equally requiring their wrath to be appeased and their justice satisfied. The doctrine of the Trinity is so utterly incomprehensible that all attempts to understand it have led to nothing but confusion; and I cannot think that an all-wise God has made our future happiness to depend upon our rightly judging as to these metaphysical subtleties. Religion, to my mind, does not depend upon our deciding these matters, nor on our accepting any conceptions of the nature and attributes of God, that are opposed to our common sense and the honest exercise of our reasoning faculties. If our future happiness depended upon our assent to what is called orthodox Bible teaching, we should not be left to the mercy of countless conflicting expositors.

With regard to the doctrine of the Resurrection, I have already suggested that the body in which

Christ is reported to have appeared to his disciples, after his death, must have been a spiritual one, and not that body of flesh and blood which was placed in the tomb ; and I think this view is corroborated by the inability of the two disciples to recognise it during the journey to Emmaus, a circumstance which could hardly have happened if what they saw was really the material body as of old. At what time was a change made in Christ's body? If while in the tomb, was the material absorbed into the resurrection body? Either something of this kind must have taken place, or a much more probable occurrence—viz., that Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, a supposed relative and probably a believer in Christ, or some one equally interested in the event, by favour or other means, secretly obtained possession of a body so dearly prized ; and, on this hypothesis (which I admit ought to be taken only for what it is worth in reconciling events traditionally transmitted from remote times, and which may be improbable on any other), the accounts of the resurrection and of a succession of spirit-appearances to his disciples and the ascension of Christ's spirit-body from the plane of earth-life, are possible, probable, and intelligible. On the

other hand, if the resurrection is viewed as the literal raising of Christ's body (flesh, blood, and bones), then its individuality must to an extent have been lost, for occasionally it is unrecognisable, at times not to be touched, then again it may be handled; now it vanishes, then it appears and partakes of fish, &c.; and, on this hypothesis, it appears that a body of flesh and blood has actually ascended to heaven, in opposition to the Bible statement that—"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven."* If it be asked—How, on your theory, could a spirit eat fish and honeycomb? I reply—In the same way that the angels are reported

* It is important to notice in connexion herewith the statement in Matthew xxvii. verses 52 and 53—"And the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his (Christ's) resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." If the material bodies of these saints were raised and the graves really opened, what became of their bodies? Does not the wording of the passage rather imply a series of spirit-appearances? These occurrences would doubtless be recorded in harmony with the notions entertained in that day of a bodily resurrection. May not the same argument apply to similar statements respecting the post-resurrection appearances of Christ? I do not offer these suggestions as a solution of the difficulties attending a belief in the literal infallibility of the Bible. They are simply theories propounded with a view to reconcile statements which, to my mind, may after all be viewed more as legends based on facts than bare facts.

to have partaken of the kid dressed by Abraham for their repast.* I am aware of the sophistry employed by theologians on these as well as other doctrinal points, and it is easy to see how the Bible may be and is made to prove anything to meet the conceptions and foregone conclusions of every sect of christendom. All that I can say is, that their explanations give me a Christ I cannot understand, and a conception of Deity which I naturally and intelligently shrink from.

We are apt to infer from the Bible that the Jewish nation alone was trained by the Almighty in the knowledge of His laws. I ask, were not the other nations of the earth equally the object of God's tender care? If not, have we any faculties for perceiving the justice or righteousness of God in training one nation and neglecting others? Again, we are taught that an infinitely wise God makes a world that instantly goes wrong, and requires something to atone to Himself for its doing so; and

* Speaking of the Resurrection, Canon Westcott says: "At the very time when He (Jesus) offered a material test of His presence He showed that He was not bound by the laws of matter. There is evidently a *law* by which the conditions of His appearances are determined."—*Contemporary Review*, November, 1877.

men, with no faculties for comprehending so marvellous a proposition, are required to believe this on pain of eternal damnation ; and, mystery of mysteries ! if they *do* believe it, it is not their own doing ; but if they do *not* believe it, it is their own fault, and they are responsible for their unbelief. The doctrine of Substitution or Atonement to my mind tends to stunt man's intellect, and to cause him to act from low and unworthy motives, and not from those spontaneous promptings of the divine part of his nature, which would make him love goodness and truth for their own sakes. "Believe and be saved," "Rest on the finished work of Christ and all is done for you," is the popular christianity of to-day. Is it, I ask, the teaching of Christ? If imputed righteousness is a fundamental doctrine of christianity, is it not a significant fact that its founder is silent concerning it? In the conversation with the woman of Samaria, as well as in the account of the woman taken in adultery, there is no hint of the doctrine of reconciliation to God by the shedding of blood. Christ is reported to have drawn a picture of the future Judgment ; and yet, in it, there is not one word about what has been believed, but only what has been done.

A young man, it is stated, asked Christ the vital question—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" There is not in Christ's reply one word about substitution or atonement; but he taught that love to God and man sums up all the law and prophets; and that the path of unselfishness leads to perfection and to God. Take the Sermon on the Mount; and what is its teaching? I answer,—The essence of Christianity.

There occur to me one or two other thoughts which not only bear upon this point, but also upon Christ's relation to and estimate of the Old Testament writings. Jesus is reported to have said in the Sermon on the Mount,—“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you,” etc. Now on turning to the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus where this doctrine is enunciated, we find that the Lord God Himself is reported as addressing Moses; hence, if Christ is God, he himself must have taught the Israelites this law; but Christ neither intimates that it was from him nor his Father, but says, significantly,—“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time,” or, as I take it, ye have it written in what you call your

sacred writings, but I say something quite opposed to them. In the last chapter of the Gospel by St. Mark, we find Christ is reported as instructing his disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and such and such signs shall follow them that believe.” These words, I take it, could not refer to the disciples only, as they could not, themselves, possibly preach the gospel to every creature. If, then, the words apply to their successors, I ask,—Do the signs follow? The sixteenth verse contains damnable clauses, which lead to the inference that this and the following verses have been added in later ages by the church; and this is confirmed by their omission from the MS. found by Tischendorf in the convent at the foot of Mount Sinai, supposed to be the most ancient copy of the New Testament extant.

Take, I say then, the Gospels, and allow for all sorts of interpolations and the tinged media through which they have been transmitted, and then tell me if Christianity is not the spirit of Christ’s life and teaching, as opposed to dogmas and creeds of churches, built upon the opinions of those who, as I believe, in ignorance, grafted the superstitions of Judaism on to the divine teachings of Christ.

The Jews could not altogether part with their victims and sacrifices, nor with the notion that the Infinite One must have shedding of blood before He could forgive them their follies, weaknesses, and sins. Hence the loving self-sacrificing Teacher was regarded as a victim, and they were thus able to retain a belief in the divine origin of their sacrificial rites, as types of the great substitute, scapegoat, and victim, they had found in the Christ; and it is not difficult to see how those remnants of Judaism have been attached to the simple yet grand philosophy that God, through Christ, revealed.

There is evidence, external and internal, that St. John's Gospel was written for the purpose of enforcing dogma; possibly to endeavour to refute the supposed errors of the Gnostics. The probabilities are also greatly in favour of the view that the synoptical gospels were offshoots of one preserved tradition, interspersed with additional anecdotes, known or reported to the scribe; each gospel being tinged with the writer's own conceptions as to the nature, character, and work of Christ. In support of this we have only to imagine three daily newspapers giving each their separate accounts of some recent review or battle in precisely the same words,

again and again, and for many consecutive lines. Would any one be justified in attributing this to chance? That the composition and compilation of the Gospels are the results of design must be evident to every thinking man. Take, for example, the reported resurrection of Lazarus, and is it not strange that an event, so marvellous in itself, and creating the sensation it must have done at the time, is not even noticed in the Synoptics? The genealogies again, as given by St. Matthew and Luke, although the alleged descent of Jesus from David is traced through Joseph, are, nevertheless, evidences of the design and desire of the composers and compilers to connect Christianity with Judaism; and to fit the nature, character, and work of Christ into their own conceptions of the fulfilment of their ancient and assumed prophetic writings.

With respect to so-called Old Testament prophecies and their asserted fulfilment in the person and life of Jesus, the limits of a letter would be greatly exceeded were I to go into details on this head. Suffice it to say, that we shall probably never know the extent to which the narrators or compilers of the Gospels have accommodated their language to the exigencies of their theories. For the most part, if

these New Testament references are thoroughly investigated, the contexts *themselves*, from which stray verses or passages have been (often violently) torn away, furnish the best evidence of the imaginative and totally inadequate foundation upon which these theories are based.*

It must be admitted that the Spirit of the Infinite One is, and ever has been, teaching millions of His creatures who have never heard of our Bible or of Christ; and it is, to my mind, altogether an unjustifiable conclusion that these people are, or were, in the land of darkness and the shadow of death, in things pertaining to the knowledge of the will of their Great Creator. It has been computed that Christians of all kinds and all churches only include, even now, about one-fourth of the population of the world; and yet we are told that "out of

* In proof of this the reader is referred to "An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity" (Hennell); Dr. H. Adler's Sermons; "The Bible and Popular Theology" (G. Vance Smith); "The History and Literature of the Israelites" (C. and A. de Rothschild); Greg's "Creed of Christendom;" "Phases of Faith" (F. W. Newman). Many startling instances of the way in which the prophetical writings of the Old Testament have been treated by New Testament writers or compilers, are given in a series of sermons on Prophecy by the Rev. Charles Voysey. See the *Langham Hall Pulpit*, Nov. 17, 1878, and following weeks.

Christ" God is, and always has been, "a consuming fire." When I have submitted this thought to my orthodox friends, the answer invariably is,—"Oh! it is not for us to know; I don't think the heathen will all be burned for ever and ever; but doubtless God has provided for them;" a confession which has certainly a gleam of humanity in it, but which is nothing but a gigantic subterfuge.

In dismissing this part of the subject, I am tempted to make one more quotation from Max Müller's interesting and instructive Lectures:— "Before the Gods of the Trinity had been worshipped, one Supreme Being had been made by the ancestors of our race, and he was known by a name which has never been erased. The ancient religion, after its rust and dirt have been removed, will come out bright, and clear, and pure; it will be the word of God revealed, where alone it can be revealed, in the heart of man." In my opinion, whatever a tender, loving Father requires of His children, does not necessitate metaphysical ingenuity to discover, church dogma to enforce, or an adept at the solution of enigmas to expound.

In your communication, you say that "Dr. Colenso has not been born again from above." I

ask, are you justified in this statement? Does the fact that you and he hold different views with respect to Biblical Infallibility prove it? You say, and to my mind truly, "that we must listen to God's voice within." What ground have you for assuming that Bishop Colenso does not listen to that voice? You say that you "ask God to set you right." Can you suppose that Dr. Colenso, Dr. Pusey, and the Pope of Rome do not the same? You talk much against "the exercise of our reasoning faculties" on questions of our credenda. Do you come to your conclusions without the aid of these faculties? If so, how? You say, "Some hearken to God's voice and are taught." Do you think there are no Jews, Roman Catholics, Hindoos, and Mahomedans who also do this? You ask, "If I wanted the solution of a question which one only could solve, would it be wise to ask others?" I say very unwise; and yet you profess to be guided by the opinions of Paul, Peter, James, John, &c. You say the question is not, Who wrote the Scriptures? but, Do they bear the mark of inspiration? I answer, some portions do; some do *not*. To take one instance—in Genesis vi. 6, we read, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the

earth." An omniscient Being repents! The very thought is an impossibility. "But," says the Bible Christian, "it does not mean *that*," and proceeds to give a fallible interpretation to an "infallible book." Here, however, arises a logical difficulty; for if the so-called Bible Christian may attach a meaning to this passage in harmony with his views, by the same rule, may not Dr. Pusey be justified in explaining the words—"This is my body, &c.," according to his particular views? It follows, then, that the words are the conceptions of a man, and *not* the infallible word of God. You deny that. What, then, guides us to our different conclusions? Something apart from the exercise of reason? If so, how can we possibly tell which is guided correctly? To illustrate this. Take three equally good, spiritually minded men, all believers in the plenary inspiration of the Bible; one, a Roman Catholic, says that he spiritually discerns, as a Bible truth, the doctrine of Transubstantiation; another, an orthodox Protestant, spiritually discerns as Bible truths the ordinary doctrines of the Atonement and bodily Resurrection of Christ; a third, a Swedenborgian, spiritually discerns that the above spiritual discernments are *not* Bible truths. Apart from reason, where is the

standard whereby to judge of “spiritual discernment?” and, if the intelligence may be exercised in deciding as to the truth of these discernments, may it not also be used as to the question of plenary inspiration? But, if our intelligence has to be fairly used, must not the standard, to which even the Bible must come, be our internal, intelligent perception of what is good and true? And is not this bringing it to our only guide—viz., Reason under the light of Conscience, which registers the measure of truth already absorbed by the soul? I believe that if this measure be actively lived up to, and if perfect freedom be given to the intellectual powers, the soul’s capacity for receiving truth will progressively enlarge. You speak also of an “absence of fear of God’s wrath,” and “integrity of life,” as evidences of your views being correct. Need I remind you of the numbers who are totally opposed to your views and conclusions, who have also that love to, and intelligent faith in, their Creator, Father, and God, which is incompatible with fear; who live lives of the strictest integrity, and die peacefully and happily, trusting in the same love and wisdom that called them into being?

In closing I will submit a proposition by way of

epitomising my remarks—viz., That there is “a light that lighteth every man who cometh into the world.” That light cannot be the light of the Bible or *Dogmatic* Christianity, for millions have not heard of either: what, then, is it? I answer —The light of the Divine Spirit, manifested in finite intelligences as Reason and Conscience. The Bible cannot be to me infallible if I interpret it wrongly; this must be conceded: therefore, I need to be quite sure that my interpreter is infallible. Where can I find such an interpreter? Is it the Pope, Swedenborg, High Church, Low Church, or “The light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”? If the last of these, can this light be received in any other way than through my mind or spirit? If not, then I argue that the Divine Image or Mind, reflected on my individual spirit, is my standard of goodness and truth, in opposition to a blind subjection to either Priest or Bible, both of which are fallible (the latter admittedly so, when not infallibly interpreted). Infallibility, then, does not exist for us, but only an inexhaustible field of inquiry, and an endless diversity of receptive powers. In this way it is not difficult to account for the different conclu-

sions arrived at by good and earnest men ; and we can now see how such men, liable to the same mental fogs and the workings of bigotry and prejudices as ourselves, cannot be admitted as *infallible* standards of what is Truth. The Bible itself is not free from error, as we have seen. The Apostles looked for a second coming of Christ in their own day ; but this does not prove them false, but mistaken men. So with Samuel, who conceived he was fulfilling God's will by " hewing Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal ;" but this does not necessarily imply, to my mind, that Samuel was justified in his conception. The same sort of thing has been done in much later days, when Roman Catholics have burned Protestants, and Protestants Roman Catholics, both " in the name of the Lord," or, as the ancients would have written, because " thus saith the Lord." I repudiate the notion, as highly superstitious, that I must believe the *whole Bible or none* ; this would involve an infallible interpretation ; and, taken literally, I question if any thinking man would entertain such a proposition ; neither do I affirm that doctrines which my intelligence cannot comprehend, and statements that appear to me mythical, are necessarily untrue.

*What I personally discredit is, that my eternal happiness or misery is depending, at all, on my believing, on the ipse dixit of others, statements and doctrines which are directly opposed to the conscientious convictions of my reasoning faculties; involving, as they do, on the assumption of Biblical Infallibility, conceptions of the Deity as possibly working at a carpenter's bench, and submitting, from necessity, to be crucified by His creatures.**

Some men (I do not blame them) put out their thinking, from indifference, or for want of time or inclination, and yield their reasoning faculties to others. They get, possibly, truth, but truth mixed with all the fogs and spots appertaining to the media through which they receive it. Others take the Bible as literally true; and they also get the truth it teaches, mixed up with whatever

* When we are arrived at manly age, there is no person on earth, no set or society of men whatever, that have power and authority given them by God, absolutely to dictate to others their opinions and practices in moral and religious life. God has given every man Reason to judge for himself in higher or lower degrees. Where less is given less will be required. But we are justly chargeable with criminal sloth and misimprovement of the talents wherewith our Creator has entrusted us, if we take all things for granted which others assert and believe, and practise all things which they dictate, without due examination."—DR. ISAAC WATTS.

errors, superstitions, and misconceptions it may contain; and thus is handed from parent to child, a mixture of truth and error, wheat and chaff; and when, as is often the case, doubts arise in logically constituted minds, from the utter impossibility of reconciling doctrinal statements with the teachings of reason, some fly to the opiate of authoritative assertions of either Priest or Bible, instead of following that light which leads to freedom and true peace. I cannot help thinking that those who are afraid of using reason, and trusting to the light within, but rather fly to sources that I have shown must be fallible, prove themselves unfit to be free, from the fact of their being incapable of using so great a blessing—a blessing only to be received through the Truth.

It must be borne in mind that our mental organisms, or that portion of our physical system through which our spirits think, conceive, and reason, vary to an unlimited extent; like the human face, no two exactly corresponding. Thus, then, supposing the mirror on which the Divine image or mind is reflected to be perfectly free from blemishes, even then, we shall perceive only that phase of goodness and truth which our intellectual faculties are at

the time capable of grasping, and may fail to perceive other phases, which are nevertheless received through our neighbour's organism. Thus, the varieties of conceptions of the Supreme Being will be, and are, as I believe, *endless*. The source of all wisdom, goodness, and truth, is GOD or UNITY; the effect, breath, energy, or manifestation, as presented in creation, is HARMONY.

Let us, then, "prove all things and hold fast that which is good," and apply this to the teachings of Priest and Bible. Let our standard of goodness be our intelligent internal perception of it; and let us bear in mind that, in proportion to the integrity and freedom of our wills, the purity of our hearts and lives, and the absence of bigotry, prejudices, and foregone conclusions, will those conceptions be in harmony with absolute truth or God; for, in doing what we intelligently and internally conceive to be God's Will, we shall ever learn more and more of it.

P A R T II.

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—ROMANS viii. 14.

IT has frequently been urged as an objection to the foregoing letter that it is "simply destructive;" and I have been peremptorily required to "furnish a substitute for the old foundations I am so ruthlessly undermining." I might fairly use the argument of one of my opponent's special pleaders—Patrick E. Dove—who says, in his "Logic of the Christian Faith,"—"It is not at all necessary that we should be obliged to explain what the true theory is. We may be quite unable to establish a positive theory that shall explain the whole mystery of human belief, of human life, of human action, and yet we may be quite as able to show that any particular explanation is erroneous. We may not be able to prove what the right theory is, and yet we may be able to prove that any one given theory is wrong, because it will not account for the facts which we know to be indubitable."

It is, however, a comfort to feel assured that all is not gone, but, on the contrary, that the foundation remains solid, secure, and indestructible,—a faith based upon the sacred intuitions of the human soul in all ages, and in harmony with the free and honest deductions of man's reasoning faculties. We have still left an internal and intelligent belief in the existence of a great First Cause of all things, whom we name God. The process of reasoning from effect, physical, intellectual, and moral, to an *adequate* cause, leads inevitably to this conclusion. We have abundant evidences all round us that God is all-wise and all-powerful; and, on further consideration of the subject, we are driven to the conclusion, harmonising at once with the soul's deepest intuitions, that God is also all-benevolent: for it is impossible to conceive of the Creator of this beautiful world—the wise Originator of all the wonderful laws by which it is governed bringing into existence intelligent beings, with hopes and sympathies carrying them beyond this present earth-life, without, at the same time, providing a consummation for the aspirations He has implanted in their nature. We find ourselves inhabitants of this world without a choice in the

matter; and, as reason is unfolded, we become conscious of possessing two natures—animal and intellectual. As to the body, we have instincts, impulses, and propensities in common with the animal world around us; the principle animating our sensual desires being purely and simply selfishness—the gratification of our animal appetites and passions. On the other hand, as intelligence develops, we become sensible of influences more occult, and of the influx of a moral principle, the recognition of which produces in us a sense of responsibility, commensurate with its perception and comprehension. We have now arrived at the conscious possession of a will-force, capable of being employed to the full extent of man's power, in choosing between two opposing principles. Here, then, is a conflict for life, in which, as I think, the animal is to be subdued and the God-like evolved. Deep down in the depths of all immorality and evil, we shall find this animal principle of selfishness producing every variety of fruit in harmony with its physical, mental, and moral surroundings.

As man progresses in knowledge, he perceives around him diversities of beliefs, professed by the various sects and churches, respecting the way and

will of the Creator, and the duties of the creature. Utterly unable to reconcile these conflicting views and creeds, the intelligent truth-seeker, relying upon the intuitions of his soul and the free exercise of his reasoning faculties, appeals for light to its eternal source—a God of Truth. Divesting himself, as far as possible, of all preconceived opinions, founded upon the particular belief in which he has been educated, the earnest searcher after Truth approaches the Divine Being with the simplicity and artlessness of a child, asking for guidance and help. And what is the teaching he receives? Need I say that it is the essence of all that is good in every religion of the world ; a philosophy in harmony with the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and of many other good men before and since his day.* Man is taught that LOVE is the principle which should influence all his thoughts, words, and deeds : that whatever appears to him to be his duty he is to do with all his might, and leave the issue in the hands of God. Thus, *learning the principle*, it is perceived that man's life is to be one of simple loving duty to his God, his neighbour, and himself, in the comforting assurance that He

* Acts ii. 22.

who has taught him the principle, in proportion to his honest endeavour to live it out, is both able and willing to provide for every contingency, to support him in the hour of separation from his earth-body, and to provide for him in the unknown future. Whatever is found in the so-called sacred writings of *every nation under the sun* that harmonises with this love-principle, may be looked upon as emanating from the same source. Whatever is affirmed respecting the way or will of God that is opposed to it, is to be doubted. In matters of history and doctrine, man is to use the intelligence with which the wisdom of his Creator has endowed him, and to hold his conclusions tentatively, as the convictions of to-day must, with truth-seekers, be subject to the increased light and knowledge of to-morrow. Thus, then, it must be acknowledged, God is incomprehensible. His presence is discerned, internally, by man's spirit; externally, in the works of creation. To God, and God alone, is man responsible for the use of the faculties with which he is endowed, and it is quite possible for him, *independent of any of the so-called revealed religions of the world*, to have an intelligent faith in the Creator's infinite power, wisdom, and love.

Two practical suggestions I submit to the unprejudiced reader. They are, as I believe, the essentials of human progress and happiness: 1st, The individual application of the Love principle to every circumstance and condition of life; 2nd, Intellectual Freedom, in the fullest sense of the words.²²

There remain two or three *side issues* frequently raised, which, as they are calculated to mislead the unwary and alarm the weak, I must briefly notice. It is urged that the number of good men and women who have lived and died in the belief of so-called christian dogmas, overwhelmingly prove the truth of *Dogmatic Christianity*. I ask, how many professing christians have, *for themselves*, ever examined the grounds of their faith? Has one in a thousand? I may safely answer, No. If this be so, it follows that nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand accept these dogmas on the assertion of others, who have themselves received them from similar sources; hence

²² Bishop Butler in his "Analogy" says, "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself."

the number of professed believers in ecclesiastical dogmas is no proof whatever that they rest upon the basis of Truth. It is not difficult to see how these dogmas have grown and become fossilised, when we consider, 1st, The ignorance and superstitions of the times in which they were generated ; 2nd, The iron hand of ecclesiasticism, which, for centuries, had the sole manipulation of so-called sacred traditions.

The next point raised may be put thus :—After a long and exhaustive controversy, during which my opponent has certainly not failed to use his reasoning faculties most vigorously, I am left with the remark, “Yes, and after all, what is a man’s puny reason ? God’s ways are not our ways,” &c., *ad nauseam*. This seems to me to be a common refuge for those who feel themselves beaten in argument ; certainly it has the advantage of seeming to be unanswerable ; but this mode of dealing with the subject, if followed by an intelligent Hindoo or Mahomedan, would be equally justifiable, and the missionary’s mouth effectually closed. All *external* standards of faith and morals—so far as they have been intelligently accepted—must necessarily have been submitted to the internal

standard of Reason. The child enters naturally and unquestioningly into the creed of its parents, and so far as men accept their standard of faith and morals on the same grounds, they are children still. It may be urged that this "childlike faith" is commendable; but few, however, would counsel its indulgence in any creed save their own. The right of private judgment is the very essence of Protestantism, and, unconsciously it may be, it is the prime factor in any intelligent secession to the Romish Communion.

The third point to which I take exception is a favourite one with the clergy. It is the "rest and peace of the *believer's* death-bed." Now what does this really mean? Is it that orthodox christians are always happy on their death-beds? Is their happiness in proportion to their orthodoxy? Are the death-beds of the unorthodox unhappy? Are professing Christians happier in their last hours than Buddhists, Mahomedans, or Chinese? Are the last moments of Protestants happier than those of Roman Catholics? I am not now speaking of evil men, but of the upright and conscientious in all these various beliefs. It is well known that these questions *can not* be answered in the affirmative.

It is as natural for man to leave this world as it is to enter it, and the two events are regulated by laws equally wise and considerate. Peace of mind in life or at death is not dependent at all upon a man's particular creed, *but upon physical conditions or a tranquil conscience*. There is no evidence whatever that the laws relating to body or mind are suspended or in any way changed to meet the cases of believers in any particular creed; hence it follows that the presence or absence of anxiety or pain at the time of separation from this earth-body is dependent entirely upon the mental and physical conditions of the dying person. If a man happens to be in a transition state, with respect to his religious belief, at this time, he, as a matter of course, lacks the serenity of him whose faith is firm in any particular mode of thought. So with regard to the body. If, at the time of dissolution, a man is suffering from functional derangement, his animal spirits will undoubtedly be depressed, whatever be his creed. The Roman Catholic priest attends a dying man and administers what he believes to be the body and blood of the living God. What is the result? The man, in the conscientious performance of what, to him, is a sacred duty, reaps

his reward in tranquillity of mind, which the priest attributes to the virtue of the so-called "Blessed Sacrament." The God of some of the faiths of the world is the sun; of others, one of the lower animals; of others, a senseless block of wood; and, again, others deify a man. When the hour of death approaches, the believer in any of these creeds, acting up to the light of his conscientious convictions, reposes in faith upon his special deity, and, if profoundly sincere, finds "rest and peace" in his last moments. What I contend for is the fact that the "rest and peace" are not dependent upon the truth of the man's particular creed, but upon the reality of his faith in that creed, and the consciousness of having lived up to its demands.*

The *dernier ressort* of so-called Bible Christians is the convenient theory of the "Limits of Religious Thought,"† which means, stripped of sophistry and metaphysical subtleties, that the moral and intellectual vision of one man is to be bounded by another man's horizon. This, as I think, is intro-

* The late Sir Benjamin Brodie in his "Psychological Inquiries," says:—"I have myself never known but two instances in which, in the act of dying, there were manifest indications of the fear of death."

† Bampton Lectures, Dean Mansel.

ducing one of the worst features of Popery into the religion of metaphysics. It must be admitted that as knowledge increases, the area on which thought can be employed is extended. For example, take a man educated in one of the religions of the world, and unconscious of the existence of any other, his thoughts are necessarily limited to his own faith : but suppose this man to be made acquainted with other religions, the region of his thought necessarily becomes extended : he may refuse to examine the claims of rival faiths—he then limits himself by his own bigotry ; but for a man professing any of these various and varying theological beliefs, to endeavour to limit the exercise of reason within the scope of his own knowledge, or the dogmas of his own particular faith, is, to my mind, one of the most objectionable proceedings possible.

From the foregoing arguments I proceed to draw a few conclusions. We have the evidence of our consciousness supported by the honest deductions of reason :—

That there exists an incomprehensible Great First Cause of all things, possessing infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, whom we name God :

That man is a compound being, animal as to his

body and its propensities, spiritual as to his soul and intellect :

That man in this world is in the infancy of spirit-life, learning, in a material body, the rudimentary lessons of an eternal spirit-existence :

That in proportion as the animal principle of selfishness is subjugated, the spirit of man is brought into harmony with God, who is Infinite Spirit, or, in Bible language, is "born again of the spirit :"

That the revelation of God to man has neither been confined to a peculiar people, nor to any particular period of the world's history, but is the continuous influx of the Divine Spirit, appropriated according to the physical, intellectual, and moral conditions of humanity :*

That this revelation is the "Word of God," of which the Hebrew poet speaks in Psalm cxix., "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," a revelation which comes directly to the heart of man :

That consciousness of the love of God, with the peace and happiness flowing therefrom, is independent of intellectual attainments.†

* John iii. 8.

† "Our physical strength may be utter weakness. We may be

That intuition is not intended to supply the place of reason, or to guide in matters of doctrine or alleged facts, these being within the province of reason.*

That Reason, under the light of Conscience, is man's *only guide* as to what, to him, is right or wrong, good or evil :

One word as to Faith. Far be it from me to wish to put reason in the place of faith ; but *true faith* is founded upon the soul's convictions, in-

ignorant of the laws of mind and matter. There may be a total incapacity to contemplate the wonders of space, the mysteries of being, and yet we may be filled with a Love such as was felt by the 'Man of Sorrows' who instructed us in no science, gave us no knowledge of art or sophistry of schools, but taught only of that great, burning, tender Love which wept for the sorrows of others, which bore the burden of others, and submitted himself to death to prove the truth of that Divine teaching that God is Love, Heaven is Love, and that the highest duty of man is Love."—EMMA HARDINGE.

* It is undoubtedly within the province of reason to apprehend and estimate the value of evidences, external and internal, which are said to prove the genuineness of any alleged revelation. But it is illogical to assume that the particular revelation we have been educated to believe in is true, and not allow a similar assumption to believers in other of the so-called revelations of the world. I am aware that writers who advocate the theory of the limitation of human thought within the boundaries of their own particular belief, describe the views above propounded as "Rational Mysticism." Be it so. The choice, then, lies between a "Rational" or an Ecclesiastical Mysticism.

volving harmony with and not opposition to the honest deductions of reason. It is one thing to have an implicit faith in the Creator, it is another thing to accept as a revelation of His will, statements and doctrines, the justice of which is opposed to the common notion of this attribute as conceived by the conscience of civilised humanity. And, if it is affirmed that *Revelation* comes to settle what reason can not decide, it must be conceded that a revelation which admits of over three hundred different sects, claiming ability to prove from its teaching the correctness of their various and conflicting dogmas, must contain within itself the possibilities of misconception and incomprehension ; and, to this extent, at any rate, fails to be a perfect guide. It comes, then, after all, to the teaching of the Divine Spirit : *and here I take my stand.* In this teaching I believe. If, then, after careful and prayerful investigation of the "evidences," there remain honest conscientious doubts as to the plenary inspiration of any alleged revelation, and if, at the same time, it be admitted that man can go *direct* to the fountain of Truth and Goodness, I fail to see why he should prefer the possibly contaminated streams of man's imperfections and misconcep-

tions to the bright waters of Truth direct from the fountain-head. If revelations are to be of any value, they should lead men to the God revealed. There is a Word of God superior to the traditional records of ancient spirit perceptions, and one that will exist when written records are no more. As stepping-stones from materialism to spiritualism, these written traditions of our forefathers may, and I believe have, their place in the Divine economy, but they are only of use as they lead us to Him of whom they profess to teach—the Great God and Father of us all, in whose almighty hands we are surely safe.

Let me remind my readers of the necessity of distinguishing between religion and theological views. Religion, to my mind, has more to do with the heart than the head, and, in its essence, is true Christianity—the homage to Deity of the heart's holiest affections ; or, in the words of Jesus, “the doing the will of our Heavenly Father.” Religion will remain, however theological views may change. There is a chain of communication between the finite and the Infinite Spirit, independent of creeds or churches. It has been well said that—“Our little currents of theological belief will, sooner

or later, be swallowed up in the mighty ocean of God's boundless love, which will end all sectarian differences in that most comprehensive of all communions—the communion of the Holy Spirit."

Psychism and Spiritualism.

"I do not share, or approve, the temper of simple contempt with which so many view the phenomena. It is a question, in the first place, of evidence: it then follows to explain, as far as we can, such facts as may have been established."—W. E. GLADSTONE.

WITH the rejection of Bible and Church infallibility, man is thrown on his own resources for evidences of God and immortality. The cultured sceptic does not deny value to the opinions of the good and wise of past ages, but he is unable to build more than a hope on such foundation. Free thought and a free criticism of the Scriptures are not calculated to strengthen a belief in immortality, founded *solely* upon historical testimony, which, to some extent at least, is found to be untrustworthy. Many religious men hold the belief very loosely, whilst the scoffer treats with derision the only fact capable of restraining his profligacy and sensuality. If such be the case, the demonstration of the continuity of a life after death, is surely *now* more needed than ever was any religious teaching or

religious truth. The cold cynicism of modern scientific philosophy is at this day landing thousands in a negation of all belief in anything supra-mundane or super-sensual.

Thoughtful men are agreed that the existence of God is undemonstrable, and if man ceases to live at the death of his body, the knowledge of God's existence is unimportant. But, if the continuity of life after death *can* be demonstrated, then is mankind provided with a sphere of possibilities, in which there is room for the existence of God, and the immortality of his intelligent creatures.

It is at this point, the evidences of what is termed Modern Spiritualism assume an importance widely separated from the superstitious fanaticism of the credulous, or the mere wonder-seeking of the frivolous investigator, and the phenomena are relieved from the degradation attached to them by non-investigating scientists and prejudiced theologians. That these phenomena do occur, on occasions when deceit is altogether out of the question, few, if any, who have devoted the necessary care and time to the investigation, will deny. It becomes then solely a question of evidence, as to whether the intelligent operator in these manifes-

tations is what it professes to be—*i.e.*, a spiritual being who has lived on this earth.

Many scientific men of high intellectual attainments declare that Modern Spiritualism gives them the demonstration so many are in search of, and this being the case, it is both futile and cowardly to ignore this subject, which is, silently it may be, converting its thousands, just as the Apostles of old converted the philosophers and sensualists of their day.

It is easy to shelter one's ignorance of this subject under theories such as "Unconscious Cerebration," "Dominant Ideas," &c., which may, indeed, be allowed to explain some phases of psychological phenomena that have ignorantly been attributed to spiritual agency; but it is only by ignoring the abundant testimony of able investigators to the occurrence of phenomena which are not covered by such theories, that partial and altogether inadequate explanations such as these find any favour with a not over-discriminating public. In examining one of the best of these theories, and one, moreover, that admits the genuineness of the phenomena, the writer is provided with the opportunity of introducing a subject, which, to his mind, supplies the

only key that will unlock the mysteries of ancient and modern "supernaturalism," involving the occurrence of supra-mundane manifestations, throughout the world's history, which it is so difficult to believe rest upon no more solid basis than man's ignorant credulity.

Dealing chiefly with facts authenticated by one of the most careful scientific experimenters of the present day,* we proceed to review that portion of two interesting volumes by Serjeant Cox, which relates to the "Phenomena called Spiritual,"† applying Serjeant Cox's theory to Mr. Crookes' facts.

There exists in man a soul or mind force, which in some persons who possess it to an unusual degree—called mediums—is capable of manifesting itself at a distance from the medium, and producing physical effects often counteracting the law of gravitation. This soul-force acts with intelligence, and frequently exhibits a degree of power, skill, and knowledge, which the medium is unconscious of possessing. The manifestation of this force takes

* W. F. Crookes, F.R.S.

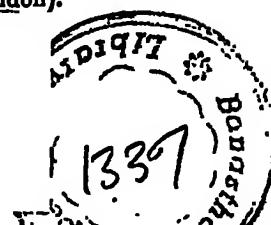
† "The Mechanism of Man" (Longmans, London).

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place, generally, under certain conditions; sometimes without the consciousness of the medium—as in somnambulism and trance. The phenomena attending its manifestation are occasionally of such a startling character, as to suggest to some minds the possibility of their having a supra-mundane origin.

Such is “Psychic Force,” the existence of which may almost be said to be demonstrated in these volumes.

There are two propositions, among others, which the author seeks to establish.

I. That there exists in man a soul, or intelligent principle, which survives the dissolution of the body (p. 436, vol. ii.).

II. That “The Phenomena called Spiritual,” may for the most part be consistently explained by the “Psychic Force” and “Unconscious Cerebration” theories—the medium himself being the unconscious performer in so-called Spiritual manifestations (p. 337, vol. ii.).

Spiritualists believe in the existence of this psychic or soul-force, equally with Serjeant Cox. They regard it as *the means* whereby disembodied spirits manifest their presence to mortals. Also, that the force proceeds from the medium seems to

be a natural inference from the fact, that in the absence of a mediumistic person there is no manifestation.

But whence the intelligence that controls the force? This is the point at issue between spiritualists and the author of "The Mechanism of Man," and it is to this point we confine the following remarks. The volumes referred to are, however—quite independent of this issue—pregnant with interest to those engaged in physiological and psychological investigations. Some of the author's suggestions may appear weak and fanciful, but the work, as a whole, cannot fail to command the careful attention of the thoughtful reader.

The question at issue between spiritualists and the defenders of the "psychic" and "unconscious cerebration" theories is probably not yet ripe for solution, but to the *balance of probabilities* we may fairly address ourselves.

Nothing can be fairer than the following statement (p. 273, vol. ii.):—"Speaking for the scientific investigators who have advanced the title of PSYCHIC FORCE, purposely to avoid the foregone conclusion implied in the more popular names," the author proceeds to say "they do not thereby intend

to assert that the Spiritual theory is absolutely false, but only *that it is as yet unproved.*" Further (p. 318), it is stated—"That almost all, if not all, of the conditions requisite to the production of the force, are inconsistent with the Spiritual theory." The conditions are then enumerated. Many of these conditions would be accepted by spiritualists, as affecting the *means only* by which such phenomena are produced. Some of the statements, however, would possibly be disallowed, though they doubtless represent the author's personal experiences. To wit, spiritualists might fairly urge in reply, that on some rare occasions, information has been imparted at séances, which was unknown at the time to the medium or any of the sitters, while messages have been given in languages unknown to any one present. It is also doubtful whether such works as Jackson Davis's "Divine Revelations" have not "added to our knowledge of the truths of nature," and "pointed to the solution of scientific problems." It may further be suggested that because a spirit is disembodied it does not follow that it necessarily becomes possessed of all knowledge, or is so changed in character as to give up a common habit amongst embodied spirits—*i.e.*, that of supplementing real

knowledge by guesses. The experiences of dissolution, and the entrance into another state of existence, may vary to a considerable extent, as may the exact localities to which disembodied spirits are introduced at death. Again, it may not be possible to convey ideas of spiritual realities to mortals, save by the employment of metaphorical language, which may appear "rhapsodical" and imaginative to the inhabitants of earth. It is also probable that perfectly reliable information from the spiritual world would appear anything but consistent with any "rational theories" of spirit-life men may now form. So much as a rejoinder from the spiritualists.

Occupying the position of unprejudiced investigators, we will proceed to apply the alternative theories of Psychism and Spiritualism to the "Phenomena called Spiritual," attested by Mr. Crookes.* Confining ourselves, mainly, to these investigations, we shall probably avoid any objections which might otherwise arise as to the reliability of the facts. Let us then strictly examine the nature of the phenomena described by Mr. Crookes.

That "a heavy dining-table" should be lifted

* *Quarterly Journal of Science*, January, 1874.

"from a few inches to one and a half feet off the ground," by the unconscious exercise of the soul-force of the medium, is in itself a stupendous proposition. That the same power, unconsciously exerted, should give "an alphabetic communication" (involving intelligence), by "luminous flashes in the air," and visibly "break a sprig off a heliotrope, and carry it to a lady," is still more staggering. But when we are asked to believe that the soul-force of Mr. Home is capable of projecting itself some distance from the medium, and making an intelligent endeavour to manipulate a pencil with a view to writing a message, and after two or three unsuccessful attempts, signalling to the effect—"We have tried to do as you asked, but our power is exhausted"—when we are told that all this is done by the soul-force of the medium, who, at the time, is in full possession of his faculties, and watching the progress of what he himself believes to be the work of disembodied spirits, we confess that the acceptance of this theory is attended with as many difficulties as is that of the spiritual theory.

Portions of a semi-materialised body, from a hand to a complete human form, were seen and handled by Mr. Crookes and others. That

these forms were objective seems to be proved by their being seen by two or more persons at the same instant, as well as by the fact of their leaving material proofs behind of the objective nature of their manifestation.

Here, then, is demonstration of a temporarily materialised human form—not that of the medium, for he is there before the Professor's eyes—intelligently manipulating matter and leaving evidence of its objective character in the shape of a flower, which remains in Mr. Crookes' possession at the close of the séance. If this is not a "ghost," what is? "One ghost," says Serjeant Cox, and Spiritualism is demonstrated. That these forms are connected with the intelligences who signal the messages, seems self-evident; and the fact that these intelligences invariably assert that they are the spirits of those who once lived on this earth, appears to us to afford some evidence, at least, of their being "real ghosts." The nature and amount of evidence that would be required to satisfy Serjeant Cox, it would be interesting to know. If the evidence of our senses may be taken as to the presence of a palpable human form, asserting itself to be the spirit of a disembodied human being, clothed

in mortal elements, for the purpose of manifesting its power, then here is evidence of an "authentic ghost."

Another and more striking illustration is given on p. 90. "A phantom form came from a corner of the room, took an accordion in his hand, and then glided about the room playing the instrument. The form was visible *to all present* for many minutes; Mr. Home also being seen at the same time." Does the psychic theory afford a consistent and satisfactory explanation of this fact?

On the question of intelligence, Mr. Crookes says (p. 91), "I have observed circumstances which seem conclusively to point to the agency of an outside intelligence, not belonging to any human being in the room;" and gives the following instances in support of this view:—"During a séance with Mr. Home, a small lath, which I have before mentioned, moved across the table to me in the light, and delivered a message to me by tapping my hand—I repeating the alphabet, and the lath tapping at the right letters. The other end of the lath was resting on the table, some distance from Mr. Home's hands. The taps were so sharp and clear, and the lath was evidently so well under control of the in-

visible power which was governing its movements, that I said—‘Can the intelligence governing the motion of this lath change the character of the movements, and give me a telegraphic message through the Morse alphabet by taps on my hand?’ (I have every reason to believe that the Morse code was quite unknown to any other person present, and it was only imperfectly known to me.) Immediately I said this, the character of the taps changed, and the message was continued in the way I had requested. The letters were given too rapidly for me to do more than catch a word here and there, and consequently I lost the message; but I heard sufficient to convince me that there was a good Morse operator at the other end of the line, wherever that might be.”

“A lady was writing automatically, by means of the planchette; I was trying to devise a means of proving that what she wrote was not due to ‘unconscious cerebration.’ The planchette, as it always does, insisted that, although it was moved by the hand and arm of the lady, the *intelligence* was that of an invisible being who was playing on her brain as on a musical instrument, and thus moving her muscles. I therefore said to

this intelligence, ‘Can you see the contents of this room?’ ‘Yes,’ wrote the planchette. ‘Can you see to read this newspaper?’ said I, putting my finger on a copy of the *Times* which was on a table behind me, but without looking at it. ‘Yes,’ was the reply of the planchette. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘if you can see that, write the word which is now covered by my finger, and I will believe you.’ The planchette commenced to move. Slowly, and with great difficulty, the word ‘however’ was written. I turned round, and saw that the word ‘however’ was covered by the tip of my finger. I had purposely avoided looking at the newspaper when I tried this experiment, and it was impossible for the lady, had she tried, to have seen any of the printed words, for she was sitting at the table, and the paper was on another table behind, my body intervening.” Which theory best explains these phenomena? Was the intelligence here manifesting that of the medium, unconsciously acting, or was it the mind of Mr. Crookes influencing the medium’s brain sympathetically; or was it what it professed to be, “an invisible being,” making known its presence through the brain organism of the medium by means of “psychic force?”

On page 380, "The Mechanism of Man," Sergeant Cox details similar interesting phenomena which occurred through the mediumship of Mr. C. Foster, and offers this explanation. "The psychic," he says, "was in a trance," in fact "dreaming and *acting* instead of *thinking only* the ideas conveyed to his brain"—a circumstance which distinguishes the trance from ordinary dreaming. On page 239 the author says, "a person in the trance most frequently believes he is not himself, but some other person, and talks of his actual self as another being." There does not appear, however, to be any evidence that Mr. Foster, any more than Mr. Home, in Professor Crookes' experiments, was in a trance. In pages 238-240, the author speaks of the entrance into the trance as being "attended by more or less convulsive action of the whole body, and that in trance consciousness is entirely suspended." It would be interesting to know whether either Mr. Home or Mr. Foster fulfilled these conditions in the cases referred to.

Can a man be said to be in an unconscious state when he exhibits the full possession of his faculties? In the case last cited, Mr. Foster appears to have been conscious of all that was going on around

him. We read—"Presently there came a shower of rappings on the table. I asked permission to look under it. The psychic at once assented, and requested me not merely to look, but to sit under it, and satisfy myself of the position and action of his hands and feet." Could this man's consciousness have been entirely suspended? If not, what becomes of the explanation that the medium was in a "trance?" Can we really form any rational conception of the mind of a man being under the control of his will whilst his consciousness is entirely suspended? Here is a man holding rational conversation, pointing out the conditions likely to convince a person of the genuineness of the phenomena, and at the same time unconscious of his own consciousness!

Assuming, however, that Mr. Foster, in this instance, was in a state of artificial somnambulism or trance when the connexion between the brain and the conscious individual is suspended, is it not ponderously difficult to suppose that the unconscious automatic action of the brain is then capable of receiving, through the medium of "sympathy," numerous details of past occurrences in the history of the questioner—a perfect stranger to the medium

—and that by the complicated process of ransacking the questioner's memory through a line of association, starting from a point suggested by a passing thought?

Mr. Crookes concludes his series of "Notes on the Phenomena called Spiritual," with an account of two occurrences of "a complex character," in one of which a hand-bell appears to have been introduced into the room by means inexplicable by the Professor. Again, in the light, in full view of all present, "a piece of China grass, fifteen inches long, slowly rose from other flowers on the table, and then descended and went straight through a chink of the table, barely one-eighth of an inch wide. The stem of the piece of grass was far too thick to enable me to force it through the crack without injuring it. Immediately on the disappearance of the grass, Mrs. Crookes saw a hand come up from under the table, holding the piece of grass. It tapped her on the shoulder with a sound audible to all, then laid the grass on the floor and disappeared. Only two persons saw the hand, but all in the room saw the piece of grass moving about as I have described." We ask, was the medium in "a trance" on this occasion? Were the two persons who saw

the hand manipulating the grass in a state of somnambulism? If not, why should Mr. Foster necessarily have been in a trance when he saw and described with such accuracy the deceased relatives of those present at the seance referred to?

On page 309, "Mechanism of Man," the author asserts that "the motions of material objects influenced by psychic force are 'always' in the direction of the circle, and usually towards the psychic." We cannot help thinking there are numerous instances on record where the motions of material objects during these manifestations have been in the opposite direction—*i.e.*, away from the circle and the medium, thus negativing the idea that there is any power of attraction centred in the medium of a magnetic character.

The investigations detailed by Mr. Crookes do not of course include a tithe of the cases in which, as it appears to us, the theories of "psychism" and "unconscious cerebration" fail to consistently cover, or rationally explain the phenomena called Spiritual. And yet, it must be allowed, the theories suggested by Serjeant Cox, supported as they are by a mass of carefully attested experiments, may account for much that has been set down as the

work of disembodied spirits. We have ourselves proved the truth of much that Serjeant Cox so ably urges as to the unreliability of the messages received through table-tipping and rappings. We call to mind a séance at the younger Mrs. Marshall's, at which there were only Mrs. Marshall and ourselves. Among other questions we asked the communicating intelligence the following: "Do you know the Christian name of my wife?" (We should say Mrs. Marshall was a perfect stranger; we had not seen her before.) We here thought strongly of a fictitious name—say "Maria." Answer: "Maria." Question, "Why do you profess to know, then tell me false?" Answer: "We work through your brain." "Please explain." "What we do not know we gather from the impressions on your brain." This was, professedly, signalled by a cousin whom we had not known, and who died some years ago in infancy. Now, it must be confessed this is hardly a satisfactory explanation, but the pertinacity with which the communicating intelligences invariably assert that they are disembodied spirits must not be ignored in gauging *the balance of probabilities*.

We have also sat *alone*, many times, and although it is most true that the messages given, in reply to

questions (the answers to which were unknown to ourselves), have almost invariably proved false, yet many of the communications have been of such a nature as to make it very difficult to believe they could have emanated from ourselves. It is but fair to add—and this must be allowed full weight on the side of the “psychism” and “unconscious cerebration” theories—that the tendency of sitting alone for any length of time in a subdued light or darkness (which undoubtedly accelerates the production of table-tipping phenomena), is to induce a sort of dreamy, mesmeric condition, approaching, it may be, the incipient stage of self-induced somnambulism. In a party of seven or eight, however, the difficulties attending the “psychic force” and “unconscious cerebration” theories are greater. We have ourselves heard a piano, an accordion, and a harmonium, all playing together within a minute after we have been seated together at a dark seance. We have *mentally* requested that a ring might be taken from our finger. In reply to this mental request, which of course was made unknown to any one present, a voice, audible to all present, said, “ You are so sceptical I can’t get near you.” This led a friend, who was sitting on the opposite side of

a large table, and quite at the other end, to ask, "What led to the spirit's remark?" We then mentioned the circumstance of our mental request, and our friend *mentally* requested that the ring might be conveyed to him. In a few seconds the transfer was made. It was taken from our finger by a soft hand without the least fumbling, and with the same precision placed on the thumb of our friend some distance away. Towards the close of the evening, extending our hand over the table, it came in contact with a large accordion, which we grasped and carefully held over the back of our chair (unknown to any of the sitters), and *mentally* requested that the instrument might be taken from us, as a final test. A voice, apparently close to our ear, said, "Would it convince you?" We replied, "I think it would." "Then I'll try." Immediately the heavy instrument was taken from our hand upward, and all present heard it being played upon, as it appeared, around the top of the room. It may be well to mention that this was at a private house, the children of the family were sitting with us, and the séance was held in total darkness.

That the intelligence of the medium, unconsciously exerted, is capable of producing all these

varied phenomena, is quite as difficult to believe as that they are the work of disembodied spirits. The chief difficulty attending the Spiritual theory appears to us to be removed by the proposition so earnestly advanced by the author of "The Mechanism of Man"—*i.e.*, that the soul continues to exist as an intelligent individualised entity after death, and moreover that it is unconditioned by time and space. There is then no *prima facie* ground for supposing that disembodied intelligences are unable to revisit the scenes of their earth lives, and, under certain conditions, manifest their presence to those they have left behind; thus proving to the weary sons of earth the reality of a home beyond. If our loved ones live on after the grave has closed over their mortal remains; if they still love us and take an interest in our welfare, what more natural than that they should frequently desire to be present with us;—it may be—under the unknown laws of spiritual sympathy and communion—soothing us in our sorrows, supporting us in our trials, suggesting thoughts in our difficulties, and otherwise influencing the souls of those still in the body.

It is but a step farther to suppose that, under certain physical and psychical conditions, they may

be able to manifest their presence to our senses, and that by laws which are unknown to us, and possibly to a great extent to them also.

They are still souls, possessing "psychic force," intelligence and affections—all the requisites for producing the "Phenomena called Spiritual,"—and when we consider for a moment the numbers that are passing over the river of death daily, in every stage of moral and intellectual development, it is not so surprising that *bond fide* messages from the spiritual world should partake of the various characteristics of the communicating spirits. We often hear of "the sacred dead," but why should a disembodied spirit be more sacred than an embodied spirit? Man is *himself* after death, or all interest in a future life is annihilated. But, if so, the liar still lies, the thief steals—or desires to steal—the benevolent are kind, the honest are truthful. If death suddenly deprived a man of his idiosyncrasies he would not know himself and others would not recognise him.

There must be a truth underlying Spiritualism, or it is one of the most stupendous delusions mankind has ever known. Phenomena identical with those called spiritual are at the root of theology,

philosophy, and religion. They form the ground-work of all the various faiths of the world. Withdraw Spiritualism from the Bible and the orthodox faith is shaken to its centre. What proof is there that man lives after death, if no one has ever returned to demonstrate the fact?

Possibly some of the phenomena may be accounted for by the "psychic force" and "unconscious cerebration" theories, and yet Spiritualism be a truth. If the mind of an embodied intelligence can control the mind of another intelligence in the body, why cannot the mind of a disembodied intelligence do the same thing? If this be an admitted possibility, it becomes a matter of evidence as to whether the controlling intelligence is truthful, when it asserts that it is a disembodied spirit? We ought to require the same credentials from a disembodied as from an embodied spirit, and receive with the same caution the testimony of the one as the other.

Granted that "psychic force" may be controlled to tip a table, or produce other physical effects by the unconscious will of the medium, or by the will of any other person present possessing greater "mesmeric power," this does not prove that

similar effects are not at other times produced by the controlling will of a disembodied intelligence.

May not considerations of this kind point the way to a rational explanation of these phenomena which appear to be inexplicable on either hypothesis *separately*? Future psychological investigations may possibly lead to the discovery that whereas "psychism" and "unconscious cerebration" are true theories, Spiritualism is nevertheless a fact.

As before urged, the author of "The Mechanism of Man," in demonstrating the probability of the continued existence of the soul after death, appears to us to prove too much for his hypothesis. If, as Mr. Crookes observes, a theory must cover *all* the facts, the question is, which of the rival theories best accomplishes this? "Psychism" and "unconscious cerebration" of themselves fail, to our thinking, to provide a consistent explanation of many of the facts, without making a greater demand upon our imagination than does the spiritual theory.

On the other hand, Spiritualism,—though not without its difficulties—offers a solution, con-

sistent if not complete, and has the advantage of covering *all* the phenomena.

One of the most important recent contributions to a discussion of this question is a paper by the Rev. W. Stainton Moses, M.A., of University College, which contains the matured views of a thoroughly able investigator, who, being himself a powerful medium, is absolutely free from those sources of error to which those are liable who have to depend on others for the means of eliciting the phenomena. In this address Mr. Stainton Moses has dealt with the question as to who is "the intelligent operator at the other end of the line." For details in support of his argument, that the operator is what "it pretends to be," the reader is referred to the address itself.* It must suffice here to state that Mr. Stainton Moses first discusses the reasons for *doubting* the claims of the operator, and these reasons he classes under the three following heads :—

1. The free use of great names where plain
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* A volume is announced by this well-known author, under the title of "Spirit Identity," which will doubtless give the evidence and arguments in much fuller detail than was possible in an address.

nonsense or pretentious platitudes are the only outcome.

2. The extreme difficulty of getting any precise facts clearly stated.

3. The contradictions and absurdities that pervade many messages.

He then proceeds to discuss the evidence on the other side, derived from personal and private investigation, concluding his interesting remarks as follows :—

“ These facts, which I could multiply greatly, I propound as establishing two conclusions—most of my friends would say more than two—but I desire to proceed with care. They point—

“ 1. To the broad fact that intelligence is perpetuated after bodily death. In other words, they point to a securely laid foundation (it is nothing more) for the revealed doctrine of the immortality of the human spirit.

“ 2. To the conclusion that the human spirit, after its separation from the body which has clothed it on earth, loses none of its individuality. In other words, they lead to the hope that we may live after we have departed this life, and that we shall know and be known to our friends.

"These two doctrines, which are integral parts of Christian revelation—personal immortality and personal recognition—seem to me to be receiving practical illustration and demonstration from the teachings of Spiritualism. The desire to live is strong in the heart of man, and the desire to live in the continued exercise of the affections, which have made the sunshine of his earthly existence, is hardly less potent and universal. Those who, in these modern days of scepticism, tell us that man has no soul, and no future before him, will tell us that a universal impulse has been transferred to the pages of revelation, and that man, having fabricated his God and his heaven, has amused himself with hopes that are the product of his own brain. We who think otherwise, who believe that the spirit is the man, and who offer some reason for adhering to a venerable belief, which, in our opinion, no modern assaults have damaged, are not likely to undervalue the testimony which is being day by day brought home to us on these points. They are to us the foundation of our religious belief so as it affects ourselves. They do not, and cannot stand alone, for, once recognised, they carry in their train the whole code of personal religion.

"Am I to live on after my body is dead? Then it concerns me to know where. It depends greatly on myself. My salvation must be of my own working out, the imperceptible yet perpetual product of the acts and habits of my daily life.

"Are my friends not lost but gone before? Yes, and if I desire to join them and associate with the pure and good who have won my love and admiration here, I must live as in their presence, and energise to lead the life that has elevated and ennobled them. I must live, as in the very sight of God, a life of self-abnegation and self-discipline, as one who subdues the flesh to the spirit, and subjugates the temporal to the eternal.

"In short, the whole fabric of religion, so far as it affects man, excluding for the moment the worship due to the Supreme, receives its sanction and stimulus from these doctrines which are becoming integral parts of the daily life of so many amongst us. In days when a fading faith has relaxed its hold on human life, when religion, as a binding power, is losing much of its vitalising influence, and becoming less and less a factor in the formation of the national character, we are

being, by the mercy of that God whose response is never wanting to the aspirations of his creatures, brought face to face with the reality of our true spiritual existence.

“There are many of us who are fain to cry, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,’ not because of the prescription of a time-honoured creed; nor because of the faith which our fathers have handed on to us, sadly battered and shattered by many a blow from destructive criticism; still less because of the dogmas of any ecclesiastical corporation; but because we have seen with our eyes, and have proven by severe methods of logic, that DEAD MEN LIVE: and because we can argue from their perpetuated life to our own; because we can hope and believe that we shall one day join the great company that has preceded us; and because we have learned from some of them lessons reasonable, comprehensible, and coherent of life and discipline, which, following, we may fit ourselves for the progressive life to come.

“It is this that constitutes for me the moral beauty of Spiritualism. Apart from its religious aspects, viewed as mere psychology, I should always regard it with deep interest, but it would possess

for me none of the far-reaching significance that it now has. Its phenomena impress me with ever-increasing wonder, though I am not always grateful for the bewilderment they cause me, nor thankful for the prominence assigned them by some well-meaning but injudicious friends, who mistake the husk for the kernel. The buffoonery that too often passes current for Spiritualism; the fraud and folly that besmirch it; the unclean things that get mixed up with it; the vagaries of the unbalanced minds that are inevitably attracted to a new and fascinating subject; these I deplore, but contemplate without dismay. They are ephemeral, and will live their little life and die. Born of human ignorance, nurtured by human folly, they will yield to advancing knowledge and increased sense of responsibility, when the true moral significance of the subject is recognised among us."

It should be borne in mind that these are not the words of a deluded enthusiast, but of a cultured man, a careful observer, and a highly logical reasoner, whose facts have been tested and re-tested with the greatest care for a number of years. The nature and the amount of testimony in favour of the phenomena called Spiritual; however explained,

afford, to the writer's mind, overwhelming proof of their objective reality.

The following works are recommended to those who care to investigate for themselves:—"The Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society;" "Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism," by William Crookes, F.R.S.; "Miracles and Modern Spiritualism," by Alfred Russel Wallace, Author of "The Malay Archipelago," &c.; "Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen," by Professor F. Zöllner, Leipzig. An abstract of some of the experiments detailed in this last work was given by Professor Zöllner in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* for July last, and a translation, giving fuller details, has appeared in the *Spiritualist* for September 20th, 1878, and following numbers. "The Debatable Land between this World and the Next," by Robert Dale Owen (Trübner & Co. 1871), dedicated to the Protestant Clergy—with an Address to the Clergy occupying 132 pages.

The Philosophy of Inspiration and Revelation.

"Truth is always clear and bright ; it is the absence of truth which is dark and mysterious. There is a light in the spirit of man which will lead and guide into all truth. This light is, what thou canst know of, thy Father's spirit."—CHARLES LINTON.

IN an essay on Inspiration, by Dr. Harold Browne, the present Bishop of Winchester (forming part of the volume called "Aids to Faith"), this subject is treated with considerable acumen. Fair and candid in his statement of the various theories which have been held by ancient and modern thinkers, Dr. Browne proceeds to point out what he conceives to be the errors involved in some of their theories, and the partial truths in others, and from these materials he constructs or adopts a view of inspiration which appears to some extent to be one of compromise. We read (pp. 302, 303), "It seems pretty generally agreed among thoughtful men at present, that definite theories of inspiration are doubtful and dangerous. The existence of a human element and the existence of a Divine element are

generally acknowledged ; but the exact relation of the one to the other it may be difficult to define.”

The argument then takes the following shape. “ There can be no question,” says the writer, “ but that that inspiration of Holy Scripture, in which the Church has generally believed, is of the nature of a miracle, and so its rejection follows upon rejection of miracles in general” (p. 303)

It seems evident that, by “ miracles,” the writer refers to certain physical and psychical phenomena which are governed by no known laws. Further, we read, “ Many marvellous things exist in nature, things, at least, as marvellous as any miracle recorded in Scripture.” There is this difference, however, between the marvels exhibited in natural phenomena, and the miracles recorded in the Bible. The former are referred to as occurring by natural laws : “ The uniform operation of those (natural) laws disposes us to doubt the probability that they will be ever interfered with. . . . This doubt is strengthened by the belief that the wisdom which first gave birth to a universe could never have wrought so imperfectly as to require active interference, in order to remedy defect, or repair the machinery” (p. 304). The latter, the miracles of

the Scriptures, are regarded as *special active interferences* by the Creator Himself, for the purpose of communicating to His creatures "some special revelation of His will, and to teach them concerning Himself what they might not be able to learn from mere natural phenomena" (p. 306). Thus the miracles recorded in the Bible are, in some way, evidences of the miraculous inspiration of the book itself.

After "miracles" we come to "prophecy." Speaking of "prophecy" as proof of the special inspiration of Scripture, the writer says: "If anything in the world can be supernatural, or miraculous, it surely must be the infallible foreknowledge of future events. No elevation of intuitional consciousness can account for such foreknowledge. None can certainly foretell the future, but one who can certainly guide the future" (p. 309). It may be remarked, in passing, that this opinion is based upon the assumption that the prophets *were* possessed of an infallible knowledge of future events.*

* The Rev. Charles Voysey, in one of his able discourses on Prophecy, taking for his text Jer. xxiii. 31, has the following pertinent remarks:—

"I will not for one moment admit that because a statement

On the question of “types” I must decline to enter. By an ingenious system of exegesis, which bids defiance to rational criticism, the Bible can be made to teach anything, from the wildest superstitions of the Peculiar People to the more subtle absurdities of a Romish Sacramentalism.

The superior knowledge and general moral teach-

or even a prediction is true therefore it could not have had only a human origin, but must have had a Divine one. But no one will hesitate for a moment to say that if a statement or prediction be false, it cannot have had God for its author. God could not be either mistaken or false. By this simple axiom we get rid entirely of all questions relating to the inspiration of the prophets. How they wrote, whether wide awake or in a trance, whether God helped them wholly or in part, whether they knew, or did not know, the full meaning of their own utterances—all these curious speculations may be passed over without the slightest injury to the main question. What alone really pertains to the argument is whether or not all that they said was true.”

After discussing this question in detail, Mr. Voysey concludes as follows:—

“I trust what has been said will be regarded as sufficient to prove that, by their own admission, the prophets of Israel were not infallible; that whatever they meant by the phrase ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ they did and could not mean such a Divine origin and inspiration of their utterances as modern Biblicalaters have foisted upon them; and that whether they did or did not believe themselves to be the mouthpieces of Jehovah, they made grievous mistakes, contradicting each other, contradicting themselves, and their supposed insight into futurity has been ruthlessly contradicted by the inexorable logic of subsequent events.”

ing of the writers of the Bible are next appealed to in support of the theory of a “special infallible revelation.” We read, “It is ever so : each petty difference of date, each little inconsistency in two concurrent narratives, even the slightest appearance of doubtful morality, anything like a supposed repugnance to what we consider the necessary attributes of the Most High, have been dwelt on and magnified, and used as objections to the inspiration of Holy Writ ; whilst the general truth of its history, the purity and holiness of its general moral teaching, the grandeur and sublimity of its doctrines concerning God, are altogether forgotten or concealed. Yet is it not true that, both in moral and physical science, nothing short of miraculous inspiration can account for the superior knowledge of the writers of the Old Testament, compared with the most enlightened sages of heathen antiquity.” The inspiration of superior knowledge, of more sublime conceptions of Deity, and of a moral code in advance of the age, does not necessarily involve *the special active interference of Deity*. On the contrary, the absolute permanence and perfection of God’s laws alone renders science a possibility, whether in the sphere of morals or physics. It by no means

follows that because a man has the power to work so-called miracles, or to predict future events; or because he happens to be a medium for the superior moral teachings of higher spheres, he is therefore the subject of a direct and special inspiration from Deity Himself. Herein, to my mind, lies the fallacy of the Bishop's argument.

It is further urged by the essayist as strong evidence in favour of a *special* inspiration, that Jesus appealed to miracles and prophecy, and to the Old Testament Scriptures generally, as testifying of himself. This might be allowed, and yet the theory of a "special infallible revelacion" be rejected. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus differed materially from the Jews of his own day in his estimation of the Hebrew sacred writings. He is reported as regarding himself as the "Messiah," for whose appearing the Jews were waiting, that through him they might be delivered from their troubles and restored to their own land and former greatness. But the premature death of Christ cut short any expectations that may have been entertained by those of his fellow-countrymen who, from the startling events of his short and sad life, were inclined to view with favour his reputed Messianic

claims. The view of inspiration taken by the writer of the essay may in short be summed up as follows :—

The inspiration claimed for the Bible is infallible so far as it relates to things pertaining to God, and fallible in matters of history and daily life. Thus, some portions of the Bible are given by organic inspiration, God Himself speaking through the medium of man's organism ; and other portions are simply the expression of the author's own sentiments, it may be under the influence of a general inspiration, or by the exaltation of his natural faculties. “The difficulty,” says the Bishop, “of enunciating a definite theory of inspiration consists exactly in this—in assigning the due weight respectively to the Divine and human elements.” And a difficulty it remains, for the learned essayist fails to clear it up. He leaves us with a Bible containing a mixture of fallible and infallible statements, and tells us that those statements which refer to God—which are just those we have no power to test the truth of—are the words of Almighty God Himself; and that the statements referring to natural phenomena, of which we are capable of judging (at all events to some extent), if they happen to be contradicted by

scientific researches, are simply the opinions of the prophets, and consequently fallible.

"A book," says a thoughtful lady, "which is partly composed of human remarks and observations, and partly of the words of a Supreme Being, the whole appearing in one form, clothed with the same authority, and with nothing to indicate the varying value of its contents, would indeed be a fatal gift from God to man. Surely He cannot be imagined to make a special revelation of His will and then render it unintelligible by allowing it to be mingled with a mass of purely human inventions. If a revelation were needed to teach us His will, then most certainly it would have been given in plain terms, and we should not have been left to sift the wheat from the chaff, relying on our internal sense of right alone which we should retain and which cast away."

It is a mere evasion of the difficulties besetting the theory advocated by the essayist to assert that "we surely have no power to limit the operation of God" (p. 312). Of course not; but the remark would be equally cogent in the mouth of a Hindoo or a Mahomedan when offered in support of the special inspiration of the Vedas or the Koran.

And yet it must be admitted the theory is a plausible, and also a convenient one, in so far as it removes the objections which are raised against Biblical statements on scientific and philosophical grounds, by providing a scapegoat in the shape of a "human element" to bear away the scientific inaccuracies, the logical inconsistencies, and doubtful moralities of the Bible.

Accepting, however, for argument's sake, the theory here propounded, a standard whereby to judge what is human and what Divine in the Bible, seems absolutely needed. Let me illustrate my meaning thus:—A Roman Catholic believes that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Real Presence. The Evangelical regards this belief as blasphemous. They both appeal to the Bible in support of their conflicting views. Which is right? Where is the infallibility? If reason and conscience be appealed to to settle the question, then are they competent to decide the previous question—*i.e.*, as to the infallibility of the book in which the disputed doctrine is said to be found. On the other hand, if the *Church* be the suggested standard, it may be asked which church, and further, by what standard are the churches to be tested?

I must confess there appears an insuperable difficulty here; on the one hand, to avoid arguing in a vicious circle, and on the other to escape the self-evident conclusion that reason and conscience are, after all, the supreme interpreters—individually and collectively—of both intellectual and moral truth. And be it understood this is Rationalism pure and simple, and the legitimate child of Protestantism.

Thoughts such as these offer an explanation of many mental phenomena in connexion with religious faith. Men postulate infallibility as a necessity. Doubtless this is so in the abstract, but in order to apprehend infallibility a man must be infallible. Hence man's knowledge of his Creator, which is the equivalent of God's revelation to him, is *progressive*. Who, it may be asked, decided that God's revelation to mankind closed with the books of the Bible? Men—fallible men—like ourselves. The Bible makes no such claim for itself, and we have no more reason for supposing that God's revelation to man is confined to the pages of the Bible than we have for believing in the infallibility of the Pope. The conclusions of such men as Dr. Newman and Archbishop Manning are logical. The believer in a *special infallible revelation*, if he

be rational and logical, is driven to find an infallible interpreter for his infallible book. Perplexed and distracted by the discordant and conflicting teachings of the various sects of Christians, he turns, it may be, sometimes in despair, to the only church which has even the appearance of being at unity with itself, a church which boasts an unbroken line of succession from apostolic times, and claims to be a divinely appointed authority for rightly interpreting the infallible Word of God. Here at last is peace and security ! What can man want more ? One lingering, loving look to the dear ones we are leaving, a plunge, and all is over ! Henceforward, "to doubt," as Dr. Newman puts it, "is to sin," and all this is the legitimate and logical issue of a belief in the infallibility of the Bible.

I will not burden this paper with the many and weighty reasons which have compelled me to reject the doctrine of Biblical infallibility, and the correlative hypothesis of a special miraculous inspiration, but proceed to offer a few thoughts on the subject of Inspiration generally, and then in its connexion with the various religious beliefs of mankind.

With Emerson, I regard "all creeds as the

result of the necessary structural action of the human mind. 'Man made them, and in the future will continue to make others, ever newer and higher, each in its turn superseding its predecessors ; but each, while it lasts, serving a useful purpose, and being absolutely necessary as a step on the upward path of progress, without which that which follows it could never be brought into being."

There is a fundamental fallacy underlying the appeal that is frequently made, both in Dr. Browne's essay and elsewhere, to the possibilities of the Divine volition. "With God," it is said, "all things are possible," and yet God cannot contradict Himself. God cannot "repent," neither can The Omnipotent be a "jealous God," however much these affirmatives clash with Bible statements.

Again, God's capacity to reveal Himself to man, if man be not an automaton, must be limited by man's capacity to receive the revelation.

Accepting unity and omnipotence, as essential attributes of the *Prima Causa* or Supreme Intelligence, we arrive at the necessary conclusion that, in some way, all that is best. This proposition (unavoidable from the premisses), be it understood,

includes the aspirations of man's nature towards perfection, and the motives which impel him to strive to attain to it.

Let us retrace for a few moments the generation of ideas in man. The fundamental basis of Intelligence is Intuition. Knowing and loving are spiritual perceptions, and constitute the essence of the Ego. It is by virtue of these intuitions man is related to his Creator. For our present purpose we need not inquire as to the *how* and the *why* of man's entrance into this world, or whether the individuality of the Ego is the result of physical or spiritual causes, or both. It suffices to know, as a fact of universal consciousness, that this Ego feels, and thinks, and loves, and that sensation, and intelligence (which embraces volition, thought, and love) constitute the fundamental basis of individualised human existences.

Sensation, as connected with the body and its needs, we may leave, observing that what the Ego requires in relation to thought and love, is simply *knowledge*. To grow in the knowledge of that which is, and to learn to love that which is right and good, is, so far as we can see, the great object of life. The knowledge and love of God is spiritual

life, the glory of the Creator consummated in the happiness of His creatures. Surely, unless creation is aimless, and the universe nothing but a dream, this, and this end only, is worthy of a Being whose attributes are unity and omnipotence. Man cannot think less or desire more. But in order to love, in the highest sense of the word, a man must have an object presented to his consciousness worthy of his love. This object may be an ideal one, but for a man to love it, he must *know* and appreciate its worth and beauty. Hence, knowledge precedes true spontaneous love. People are bidden to love God, as though it were not irrational to suppose that any one can love God because he is told that it is his duty to do so. We love because we cannot help it.

Having thus arrived at the necessity for this knowledge which must precede the love of God (using the word love in its higher sense as indicating reverence, adoration), we are in a position to consider the method, so far as we can see indications of it, by which the Creator is accomplishing His Divine ends; and here it is necessary to take issue once and for all with the Hebrew conception of man's origin. Whatever be the origin of the

individualised entity, man, it is becoming more and more evident, as knowledge increases in the various sciences which encompass this question, that man, as to his body, has been evolved from lower animal life. This is reduced almost to a certainty by the consciousness which man possesses of his relationship to the selfishness and sensuality of an animal nature. There is no need of a personal Devil, with all the absurdities and inconsistencies that a belief in such a being involves.

No mythological Satan is required to account for the propensities attached to human nature. Selfishness and sensuality, originating in the necessities of animal life, are the prolific parents of all so-called evil, of which, so long as man's ancestors remained in the "Garden of Eden" (animalism), they were unconscious, and were consequently in a state of happy ignorance.

Organic evolution, during possibly countless ages, had been preparing an organism sensitive to the influences of *Spirit*—Love and Intelligence. The germination of the seed of spiritual perceptions (intuitions, scintillations from the love and wisdom of the Supreme Intelligence), in the prepared soil of a receptive organism, resulted in the in-

cipient aspirations after the fruit of the tree of knowledge, of which our remote ancestors ate, when the light of the Divine Spirit broke in upon the darkness of their animalism and ignorance, and their eyes were opened, and they perceived that they were naked. Thus, in the fulness of time, a body was prepared, "the word was made flesh," and man began to be.

The seed of the spirit taking root in the soil of man's animal nature, developed within him a consciousness of something higher than himself—the knowledge of a higher and a lower good—good and evil. Henceforward, man is related to the Creator in his participation of the principles of love and intelligence. The perception of good and evil was the birth of man's *will* and consequent responsibility. Made thus in the image of God, so far as his spiritual nature is concerned, and with a sense of his own ignorance and imperfection revealed to him by the light of the divine spirit within him, man commences his search after God, the knowledge and love of Whom is alone capable of satisfying the yearnings of his spiritual nature. In the dual constitution of man's nature is found a sphere for his education. Through the indwelling spirit of

the Most High he is attracted toward goodness and truth. In the conflict with the propensities of his animal nature he finds a field for the exercise and development of these spiritual instincts. This conflict between his two natures is man's first perception of God, and the Creator's first revelation to man.

It has been necessary to enlarge somewhat on these points, as it is on the fundamental difference of the conceptions of the origin of man that reason takes its stand. If there has been no fall from a perfection, which man is supposed to have originally possessed, then the necessity for the orthodox scheme of salvation falls to the ground, and we are face to face with a consistent philosophy of the evolution of religious thought and emotion, analogous to the system of gradual and progressive development we are recognising as having taken place in the sphere of physics and other sciences.

The purport of these remarks is to point out the basis of all religion—which is to be found in the universal intuitions of man's spiritual nature. Man, by virtue of these intuitions, is in direct communication with absolute truth and goodness, that is, with Deity. Man's intellectual perceptions (indi-

ividually and collectively) of these principles constitute the measure of Divine revelation to humanity. This I take to be the true theory of inspiration, so far as Deity is concerned. Partiality is incompatible with any notions of justice. Hence, Divine inspiration is *universal* and *constant*. If God, by any arbitrary process, were to put into men's brains a knowledge of that which they were unable to attain by the use of their faculties, it would be at the expense of their rationality, individuality, and responsibility. The test of God's revelation to man is its universality and consistency. Man has within him the seeds of perfection; they require, however, light (knowledge) and heat (love) for their development. Whatever obstructs the entrance of light and love into the soul of man retards his progress, and places a barrier between him and his Creator.

So much with respect to "inspiration in its general or universal sense." We will now turn our attention to the question of "Inspiration in its connexion with the various religious beliefs of mankind."

In all religions there is the universal element to which I have alluded, and also a special element,

which—arising out of its particular origin and development—is peculiar to each. The unity of religions will be found in the universal element which contains within itself all that is necessary for man's growth in the knowledge and love of his Creator. In the various peculiarities of religious beliefs, we meet with a substratum of the "supernatural," out of which the special element of historical religion has undoubtedly arisen. There is also a decided relationship existing between the "supernatural" phenomena recorded in the sacred books of the various faiths of the world.

Dreams, visions, spiritual appearances, obsession, exaltation and trance, are common to all. That these phenomena are possible, we have evidence of no ordinary quantity or quality at the present day—evidence which is capable of verification by the earnest and honest investigator. That they have been observed along the ages, religious history amply testifies. If the possibility of communication between mortals and the spirits of those who have left this earth be admitted—and it is difficult to see how a believer in the Bible can doubt it—we are in possession of a key which will unlock many of the mysteries of "revealed religion."

Here is a field for investigation worthy the best energies of the man of science and the philosopher. To be able to throw light on obscure phenomena, which the ignorance of past ages has attributed to the special and direct action of the gods, is surely no unworthy aspiration for any earnest truth-seeker! To shun the inquiry does not get rid of a question which sooner or later will demand attention.

If there is such a thing as trustworthy testimony at all, and if there is evidence upon which we deem it right to behaviour fellow-creatures to the hulks or to the scaffold, him indeed must the phenomena of "Modern Spiritualism" be accepted as facts,* and if so, their identity with much of the Spiritualism of the Bible cannot fail to be perceived. The appear-

* "Of the members of your sub-committee about *four-fifths* entered upon the investigation wholly sceptical as to the reality of the alleged phenomena, firmly believing them to be the result either of *imposture*, or of *delusion*, or of *involuntary muscular action*. It was only by irresistible evidence under conditions that precluded the possibility of either of these solutions, and after trial and test many times repeated, that the most sceptical of your sub-committee were slowly and reluctantly convinced that the phenomena exhibited in the course of their protracted inquiry were veritable facts."—*Report of No. 2 Sub-Committee of the London Dialectical Society in their investigation of the Phenomena alleged to be Spiritual Manifestations.*" London : J. Burns.

ances of “spirit hands” (Dan. v. 5; Ezek. viii. 3,) are common occurrences at the present day. “Tongues of fire” fairly so described, I have myself witnessed over the heads of sitters at séances for spiritualistic manifestations. The vibration of the room I have also felt. These illustrations might be multiplied to a considerable extent. Able and trustworthy men, on whose powers of observation, and on whose veracity we may implicitly rely, have witnessed phenomena which, in past ages, would have been deemed miraculous, and have heard the unlettered ignoramus speak fluently in a language with which he was totally unacquainted.*

Spirits, good and bad, are represented in the Bible as constantly influencing material substances. Phenomena of a similar character may be witnessed at the present day by those who care to investigate for themselves. The agency engaged in their production is professedly that of disembodied spirits. If spirit agency be disallowed in the explanation of

* The testimony of such men as Mr. Alfred Wallace, Mr. Crookes, Mr. W. Howitt, Mr. Cromwell Varley, and Judge Edmonds, can hardly be ignored, neither can their asserted facts, with a due regard to modesty, be attributed, by non-investigating opponents to phantasy.

present-day phenomena, the objections to this theory will have a proportionate value when applied to the Spiritualism of the Bible.

In mesmeric phenomena there is abundant evidence of the power of one mind over another, even to the extent of a complete control. I will not stay to offer evidence in support of what is capable of demonstration. Suffice it for my present purpose to point to the possibility of an embodied spirit gaining the complete control of the mind and will of another embodied spirit ; and if this is capable of proof, which I unhesitatingly assert, then on the admission of the possibility of spirit communion with mortals we are advancing fast to the theory of " Inspiration in its connexion with the various religious beliefs of mankind," which suggests itself to me as the only one capable of affording a rational and consistent explanation of historical, as distinguished from natural or universal religion. According to the theory advanced by the more thoughtful and intelligent Spiritualists, and taught, it is asserted, by the manifesting spirits themselves, the process by which the " magnetiser" obtains partial or complete control over the mind and will of his subject is identical with that by which a disembodied spirit

inspires or takes complete possession of the organism of a spirit in the body. When the control is partial only, then the natural powers of the magnetised person become exalted by the influx of ideas from a higher sphere. The subject of the inspiration feels that he is speaking under the influence of a power beyond himself, and his hearers are often spell-bound by the fervour of his eloquence.

This it is that explains the exceptional powers of such men as Wesley and Whitfield, and it is in this direction we may look for a philosophy of "genius" in its various manifestations.

In the case of complete control, the controlling intelligence, embodied or disembodied, takes full possession of the brain organism of the subject, and is able to use it to the full extent of its powers. By this I do not mean the normal powers of the subject only, but the inherent possibilities of its organic capability when under abnormal cerebral excitement. This qualification, for which there is plenty of evidence, it is important to notice, inasmuch as it shows that although the controlling intelligence, whoever it be, can use the brain organism of the medium to the fullest possible extent, he is nevertheless limited by its organic capacities and

idiosyncrasies, and is unable through it to transcend the limits of human apprehension. This circumstance supplies an answer to the question often propounded with reference to both ancient and modern Spiritualism, "If the controlling intelligences are really the persons they profess to be, why don't they tell us more about the next world?" A pertinent and fair question undoubtedly, the reply to which is, on our present hypothesis, that the *conditions* of life after death are so different from anything that comes within the range of our present experiences that any attempt to convey ideas of heavenly surroundings through the medium of earthly imagery—in the present state of man's knowledge and development—only tends to confusion, inasmuch as it necessitates the employment of a symbolism so mystical as to be incoherent, if not at times almost grotesque.
(Rev. iv.)

Some of the more mystical of the prophetical books of the Old Testament, the Apocalypse, and the trance visions of Emanuel Swedenborg, are instances of the endeavour on the part of manifesting spirits, or the entranced mediums themselves, to give utterance to ideas which transcend the

powers of human apprehension. St. Paul acknowledges the impossibility in 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4.*

A dispassionate survey of the whole bearing of

* "The life, or mesmeric force, is the stream which conveys the spirit thought. As in mortal mesmerism, when the patient is made to participate in the sensations of the mesmeriser, so in spiritual influx the medium is made to convey the ideas of the mesmerising spirit. In both cases a state of trance is favourable for the process ; but there is this difference between the results in the two cases, and this Swedenborg calls a difference of degree. In mortal mesmerism the sensations of one in the same condition as the patient are transmitted through his brain. In spiritual mesmerism—inspiration or influx—ideas belonging to a higher come into a lower sphere, but the brain, or receptive apparatus of the medium, is formed to vibrate in unison with the surroundings of the external world, and from these surroundings his normal ideas are obtained, as the inner life of the plant or animal forms its outer body from the earth and air which it meets and assimilates. So, when the efflux of the spirit conveys ideas of a degree above those which are natural to the medium, these ideas must take the forms which the medium's brain is fitted to receive and convey, and these forms are of our earth. No thought can pass through the mind of the medium in the form in which it exists in the spirit's mind, unless the substance of it is common to both, as is the knowledge and remembrance of earthly things. Spirits even in a high state seem to be able to give names and to recall memories, for they have the knowledge of earth, *plus* the new wisdom of the spirit sphere, but they cannot convey the last precisely as it exists in their minds, because the medium does not know their imagery and cannot repeat their language. When spirits wish to give descriptions of their present state, their homes and surroundings, the thought, falling into the medium's brain, assumes, by the law indicated, the language of earth. So a spirit may describe his home through the mediumship of several persons, no two of whom will exactly agree, though flowers, chairs, and tables will perhaps be described ; yet there will

this subject tends to my mind to support the following propositions :—

1. That communion between the material and spiritual world is an established fact.
2. That Modern Spiritualism is a continuation of the same phenomena as those recorded in the Bible and in the other sacred books of the world, which phenomena have occurred, with a greater or lesser degree of intensity—dependent upon conditions with which we are at present unacquainted—in every age.

The difficulty presented by the conflicting statements and teaching of spiritual beings is a real, but not, I think, an insuperable one. The testimony of those who have investigated the phenomena, and studied the philosophy of spirit communion, is to the effect that genuine spirit communications are not only not infallible, but in many cases unreliable.

be the same objects often mentioned, because some symbols are common to all minds, and if the descriptions are carefully examined they will be found to portray the same spiritual state under differences of imagery and language. Thus, according to the capacity of the medium will be the language and imagery in which a truth is clothed, and this imagery forms the *symbolism* used by the spirits in all communications from a higher sphere. For “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into man’s heart to understand, the things of the higher life.”—S. E. DE MORGAN.

The laws governing spiritualistic manifestations are, as yet, almost unknown by us, and there is reason to suppose they are but imperfectly understood by the manifesting intelligences. There are probably many difficulties to be surmounted by spirits in communicating with mortals. Playful, foolish, and lying spirits may, under certain conditions connected with the mental and moral temperament of the circle, obtain control over the line of communication and endeavour to carry out their various idiosyncrasies. These and many other reasons will suggest themselves to the thoughtful investigator in explanation of what is undoubtedly an unsatisfactory phase of the spiritualistic phenomena, and point to the necessity for "trying the spirits."*

* "Beginning at the A B C, I plodded upwards, the only true road (for believe me there is no royal road) by which we can arrive at a thorough belief in the reality of spirit communion.

"From mesmerism and clairvoyance as stepping-stones, I turned my attention to Spiritualism, so called. My spirit friend to whom I have alluded was ever near me. He arranged with me a private sign for a "test," to secure me from wandering or intruding spirits. There is great danger in being misled by these, and I take this opportunity of warning some of you. They sometimes come for sympathy—sometimes, and oftener, for mischief. We cannot be too guarded.

"I think I must not omit an episode which deepened my conviction of the reality of my spirit friend's guardianship. It was suggested

As I have before urged,* "we ought to require the same credentials from a disembodied as from an embodied spirit, and receive with the

at a family circle to ask him, as a "test," to describe the place at which he had passed away. To my dismay, he gave an account very wide indeed of the mark. My son was equally disappointed and surprised. We questioned the spirit again and again, persuading him, or rather trying to persuade him, that he must be mistaken. He stuck to his point, however, assuring us that he had *not* died at the Albany, where I and my son had taken leave of him on what I believed to be his dying-bed. You all know what pain it is to distrust one you have long believed in: it was anguish to me!

"A few years afterwards a gentleman, whom I had never seen before, called upon me, and introduced himself as being an investigator of Spiritualism. In those days it was a much more tabooed subject than it is at present, and if we valued the good opinion of our friends as to our sanity, the very term was strictly avoided. I would never, however, allow these considerations to influence me, and so we entered freely into conversation. I told him what I have just narrated. Strangely enough he happened to have been an old friend of my, until then, trusted guardian. I cannot describe my satisfaction when I was informed by him that W. E. (we shall call him) had been removed from the close atmosphere of his chambers in London by his physician, as a last hope that an operation might be undertaken in a purer air, which might possibly save his life. The patient was removed, the operation performed, and he died under it. The spirit was right after all, and, but for this accident, we might have cruelly distrusted him ever after."—From the experiences of Mrs. G. Desmond Fitzgerald, 6, Akerman Road, Brixton, as given in *The Spiritualist*, Nov. 22, 1878.

* "Psychism and Spiritualism," *ante*, p. 98.

same caution the testimony of one as of the other.”*

It is no uncommon occurrence at the present day for the intelligences manifesting through mediums to assume certain positions, names, and characters, not necessarily with a view to deceive, but in order to give greater weight to their testimony, or it may be to place themselves *en rapport* with the mental conditions and prepossessions of the mediums. In an interesting and an apparently well-authenticated account of the liberation of an Indian warrior, by President Lincoln, at the instigation of a spirit who manifested through the mediumship of Mrs. H. Conant, it is stated that E. C. S. Dow, Esq., a well-known lawyer of Davenport, Iowa, was the person selected by the manifesting intelligence to seek an interview with the President of the United States, and to endeavour to obtain the prisoner's release. After some considerable difficulty this was

* “Spiritualism has, unfortunately, been supposed to be the true source of religious doctrine; and from this mistake has arisen all the follies and extravagancies which now disgrace it. People think that the dictation of an opinion by a spirit is a guarantee of its truth; but no fact in Spiritualism is more patent than that shoals of spirits, of all grades and conditions, are about us, and dictate those opinions which they held on earth.”—WILLIAM HOWITT.

accomplished, and Mr. Dow was then instructed by the spirit to procure an interview with the Indian Chief, and obtain from him a promise that if he were released he would keep the peace in future and use his influence as a pacificator with his people. The spirit is reported as adding (and this is the point of interest in connexion with our present argument), "I will go forth with you, and should that warrior—filled with bitter memories of his subordinate's action—refuse to listen to your words, if you will take the Chief's hand, I will influence him to such an extent as *to impress him that the Great Spirit is speaking with him.*"* That this has been done in past ages is more than probable.

With respect to the Divine claims attributed to the Hebrew God, my position is, that these claims were, for the most part, assumed or accepted by the manifesting intelligence, for the purpose of placing himself *en rapport* with the mental idiosyncrasies and prepossessions of the medium, and that the manifesting intelligence was probably a presiding spirit of the Hebrew nation in the spirit world.†

* *The Medium*, November 27, 1874.

† It may be that the prophets themselves have frequently clothed

The evidences in favour of this view are many and cumulative. Many passages in the Old Testament Scriptures indicate that the Hebrews regarded their God as one of many gods,* and there are distinct traces of the growth of the idea—first of the superiority of their Jehovah to the gods of surrounding nations—“the God of gods”—issuing eventually in the conception of their God being the “only God.” This growth in the theological conceptions of the Hebrews points to the origin of their monotheism, the natural outgrowth of a dissatisfying polytheism. To go into detail in support of this position would unduly lengthen this paper. The unbiassed truth-seeker can hardly read through the early books of the Old Testament without perceiving strong presumptive evidence in its favour, or without arriving at the conclusion that the God of the

their inspirations in metaphorical language, suggestive of divine authority, solely for the purpose of edification, or, in many cases, have accepted their own conscientious convictions of what was just and right as the voice of Deity within them.

* “The book of Daniel manifests that by the time of Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews had learned each nation to have its guardian spirit, good or evil, and that the fates of nations depend on the invisible conflict of these tutelary powers.”—*Phases of Faith*, F. W. NEWMAN.

Hebrews was one like unto themselves. The evident and recorded jealousy of the Hebrew deity—the marked indications of a revengeful spirit, totally opposed to the spirit of the God of succeeding prophets, and of Jesus—the nature of the conversations and controversies between the Hebrew deity and Hebrew mediums, all point in one direction.

This view of the nature and teachings of the Old Testament seers and prophets, is supported by a careful study of the “supernatural” manifestations recorded in the Bible, and also by comparing ancient with modern phenomena. A few illustrations will suffice to point the direction in which this evidence lies.

Moses needed to go up into a mountain to meet God. He talks with Deity as a man talks with his fellow-man, and is permitted to view his person. Surely this is utterly incompatible with any conception of the Almighty that can be entertained in this nineteenth century.

The child Samuel was aroused from his sleep by a spirit voice. “Eli perceived that it was the Lord,” and Samuel thereupon received the message as directly from Deity. Eli’s educational prepossession was conveyed to Samuel, and the manifesting

intelligence would be conditioned by the circumstance.

Nebuchadnezzar saw four men in the “burning fiery furnace, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God.” How could Nebuchadnezzar have known this? Nebuchadnezzar’s prepossessions supplied an explanation of the spirit form which he saw before him.

It is stated, moreover, in the Bible, that spirits were employed by God to manifest His will to the Hebrew nation; and, further, that “lying spirits” were accepted by Deity (at their own instigation) to carry out His purposes. Only on the hypothesis that this was a Hebrew deity can this be received as a statement of fact. That the occurrence of “supernatural” phenomena was inseparably connected in the Hebrew mind with a revelation from their God is evident from the tenor of the Old Testament Scriptures. That they believed their God to be superior to the gods of the neighbouring nations is equally clear, and with these mental prepossessions it is not difficult to trace, from subsequent experiences, and the light that is now being thrown on psychological phenomena, the gradual evolution of the “special revelation” to the Hebrews. This

argument is strengthened by certain passages in the Old Testament, where the words Lord, God, Angel, and Spirit, are used as convertible terms when applied to the manifesting intelligence.

The hymn of Creation, the Mosaic legislation, the seership of Samuel, the Psalms of David, the predictions of the Prophets, the miracles of Jesus, the philosophy of Paul, and the trance vision of St. John the Divine, all find their place in this theory of the evolution of historical religions. Collateral evidence in support of this view may be found in the "supernatural" phenomena connected with the history of the early Christian Church, and also in the relation of the manifestations through Roman Catholic seers to the theological prepossessions of the mediums.*

The "special revelations" of other faiths will be found to be in conformity with the principle of mental limitation and educational prepossessions here suggested. It must not, however, be supposed that this theory is intended to cover *all* the "supernatural" events recorded in the various scriptures

* The revelations of Swedenborg are relieved of much that is perplexing when viewed in this light.

of the world. It will be sufficient for my purpose if the theory provides a substratum of supernaturalism, founded on a chain of evidence extending throughout the world's history, out of which many of these recorded events have arisen. The possibility of intercommunion between the two worlds once admitted, it is not difficult to trace the genesis and growth of those exaggerations and mythical accretions which have gradually, and it may be unconsciously, clustered around centres of *fact*. The tendency we find amongst the uncultivated to intensify and multiply stories which excite their wonder or fill them with awe, the absence of literary and scientific checks, and the certainty of attendant spurious manifestations, are amply sufficient to account for any recorded phenomena which may not appear to be covered by this theory. To distinguish between the real and the mythical presents an almost insuperable difficulty at the present day. The light of cumulative experiences arising out of physiological and psychological investigations, and an extended acquaintance with the laws that govern these occult phenomena, appear to be the only tests at present available.

The position I take with respect to "specially

revealed religions" is, that they are natural evolutions of theological views and conceptions arising out of humanity's progressive aspirations towards Light. In these aspirations, which are divine inspirations—the factors of universal religion—man is brought *en rapport* with the supersensual world, and into communion, consciously or unconsciously, with the spirits of those who have gone on before, and who, under certain unknown conditions, are enabled to manifest their presence and convey to mortals the sympathy and wisdom of a higher sphere.

In the infancy of the race these manifestations of spirit-power were attributed to the gods, and any revelation from the spirit-world was regarded as the voice of Deity, and this in conformity with the natural tendency of the uncultivated mind to deify an unknown power. Whatever will explain modern Spiritualism will account for ancient Spiritualism, the difference in manifestation and detail being referred to the circumstances of the times, to climatic and other surrounding conditions, national idiosyncrasies, and the educational bias and mental prepossessions of the mediums.

To pursue this subject in all its bearings would

take too long. I can only point out the direction in which, as I think, a rational solution of the question of "revealed religion" lies.

To trace all the analogies that exist between ancient and modern "supernatural" phenomena and the successive links of the chain which bind the two together, forming the substrata of all historical religions, would furnish materials for another essay. Could we see far enough, we should doubtless find a band of unity encircling all religious beliefs, a progression along variously conditioned lines of thought, converging as the light of Infinite Love is steadily approached.

Taking a general view of Revelation my position would be this: Man's perceptions of the nature and will of Deity constitute the science of theology, which, like all other sciences, is one of growth. From the dawn of intelligence in man, these perceptions have taken shape and character in harmony with his surroundings, the progressive development of the intellect, and the cumulative experiences of the race. In this sense the so-called sacred writings of the various faiths of the world may fairly be regarded as revelations. To reduce any one of these to a finality and say, "Lo! here is truth, the

whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for all time," is, to my mind, to misconceive the nature of revelation altogether, and lands the free and thoughtful man in a wilderness of inconsistency; whereas truth must be consistent.

The following suggestive passage on this subject occurs in Dr. Davidson's Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 234-239 :—"The great and eternal One reveals Himself through and by man, in conformity with the gradual development of the human mind. The growth of man's apprehension of God marks the progress of revelation. The *divine* in man—that which allies him to the Omniscient—unfolds itself in harmony with the law of its nature, giving expression to itself in sensuous forms. God speaks to man, or man speaks of God, agreeably to the era described or the idiosyncrasy of the writer. A knowledge of the Supreme, more or less imperfect, characterises such communications. The communications are human, but they are also divine, as being the utterances of the divine in man *at the time*. They are, in short, a *divine revelation*. . . . When it is taught and received for orthodox that God only revealed Himself to man in former times by certain occasional and external miracles, and that our knowledge of Him is limited to what ha

been written down of such communications, we have reason to fear that we have too little sense that God is always actively present with us now, and to suspect that our own belief is mechanical, sceptical, and superstitious at once.”

From what I know of the other sacred books of the world, they appear to contain a mixture of true inspiration, sublime ideas, and historical facts, with legendary narratives, superstitious notions, erroneous conceptions, and obscene stories. I grant that the Bible excels in the moral philosophy it inculcates, a circumstance capable of rational explanation on natural grounds. In many respects the Bible corresponds with the other sacred writings of the world, and, like them, must be tested by its intrinsic worth, and by the appeal it makes to the reason and conscience of civilised humanity.

At the risk of being tedious, I feel constrained to extract a passage from the writings of a fearless truth-seeker—one who has recently gone from us, and whose tranquil end gives the lie to the arrogant assumption that none but the orthodox believer can know the blessings of a peaceful death-bed.

* John Robertson, Coupar-Angus, “The Finding of the Book,” pp. 154-156.

“The knowledge of religious truth comes to us partly by transmission, as does the knowledge of scientific truth; but in the one case, as in the other, it does not become knowledge by virtue of the authority which transmits it, but only by our own discernment of its inherent truth. . . . Our knowledge of spiritual truth is in a great measure founded on the Bible, because it has been the teacher of our teachers for eighteen hundred years, and its doctrines are those which have been transmitted to us, variously modified by ancient and modern interpretations. To the Bible, in the first instance, and chiefly, we owe the vantage ground on which we stand. The Bible and its history are the history of our religion, from whence we can best learn the various stages through which it has passed in its progress from the rudest idolatry among the ancient Jews, down to these days of enlightenment. If our conceptions of God and truth are nobler or clearer than those of the heathen, we are indebted for that to the Bible, because it is the vehicle by which the light of other days has been transmitted to us. Our lamps have had almost no other kindling. When viewed as the vehicle and history of religion, the Bible is invaluable, and never can cease

to be studied with interest and advantage; but to set up the history as an infallible standard, and as an authority commanding absolute submission, is a monstrous absurdity which Protestants are now rather generally beginning to perceive, and which cannot much longer be continued."

This analysis of the philosophy of revelation in its twofold aspects—universal and historical—leads to the conclusion that inspiration is both immediate and mediate. Immediate inspiration is the breath or life of Deity manifesting itself through the medium of material organisations, which, in the case of the human organism, results in sensation, cognition, and affection, constituting an individualised conscious Ego—a finite Spirit. Man's aspirations towards goodness and truth originate in the connexion of the finite with the Infinite Spirit, and it is by virtue of this Divine indwelling, man is able to recognise goodness, and to grow in the knowledge of truth.

Mediate inspiration, or the psychological influences and impressions of fellow-spirits, embodied or disembodied, have all to be submitted to the verifying faculty, which is the individual perception of the Divine within man. To alter a man's per-

ceptions you must add to his knowledge, and thus help forward the development of his intellectual faculties. To kindle his goodness you must influence his affections by the example of a pure and unselfish life. Man's spiritual perceptions are thus gradually evolved. His spiritual growth is necessarily slow, or he would be blinded with excess of light. The progressive development of the inherent possibilities of the Ego, we can readily believe, constitutes the employment of eternity.

In concluding this paper I will anticipate one or two objections to the theory here propounded as to the nature and origin of historical religions. It will be urged that the argument is purely hypothetical, and dependent entirely upon the truth of the spiritual theory as accounting for modern "spiritual" phenomena. My position is that whatever will explain modern Spiritualism will go a long way towards the solution of ancient Spiritualism. Spiritualists assert that the evidence in proof of the reality of the alleged facts, on which modern Spiritualism is based, cannot be disputed by any unprejudiced person who thoroughly investigates the subject. That there are strong grounds for this assertion must, I think, be admitted by all who dis-

passionately weigh the evidence offered in support of it.

Mr. Alfred Wallace, in his "Miracles and Modern Spiritualism," writes as follows:—"My position, therefore, is, that the phenomena of Spiritualism in their entirety, do *not* require further confirmation. They are proved quite as well as any facts are proved in other sciences, and it is not denial or quibbling that can disprove any of them, but only fresh facts, and accurate deductions from these facts. When the opponents of Spiritualism can give a record of their researches approaching in duration and completeness to those of its advocates, and when they can discover and show in detail, either how the phenomena are produced or how the many sane and able men referred to have been deluded into a coincident belief that they have witnessed them, and when they can prove the correctness of their theory by producing a like belief in a body of equally sane and able unbelievers—then, and not till then, will it be necessary for Spiritualists to produce fresh confirmation of facts which are, and always have been, sufficiently real and indisputable to satisfy any honest and persevering inquirer."

* Burns, London.

Mr. W. Howitt, writing to a gentleman on the staff of the *Nottingham Journal*, says :—

“ With respect to your immediate inquiry as to the reality of Spiritualism as a fact, I should have thought you could amply have ascertained that at this time of day. My experience of it has been of about twenty-five years, and of its reality I have only been more deeply convinced. Undoubtedly we consider Spiritualism as one of our greatest blessings, from the simple fact that it has given us positive proofs of the continuity of existence, taught not only in the Bible, but by all the great authorities of all times and nations. It is one thing to *believe* this, another to *know* it from actual and unquestionable evidence. This is a fact which demons as well as angels can demonstrate, and in Spiritualism you come on plenty of evidence from both sources.

“ What our experiences have been are the experiences of tens of thousands of people of the most sound intellects and sober senses. Yet you will see by what I have said that the inquiry must be entered upon with the same caution that any one would deal with those beneficial agents, fire, water, or lightning.”

It is a singular fact that almost any amount of testimony in favour of modern spiritual manifestations is received with incredulity, if not derision, by professed believers in the "supernatural" occurrences of past ages. From the standpoint of reason, however, I fail to see why the unimpeached testimony of living men and women, in an age of scepticism and science, open to test and examination, should be less trustworthy than the statements of Luke the physician, Matthew the tax-collector, or a few Galilean fishermen—men who lived in a very superstitious and unscientific age.

The uniform testimony of the manifesting intelligences to the continuity of the mental and moral conditions of the individual spirit after death, presents a difficulty to many. It conflicts with the doctrines of orthodox theology to be told that with the exception of a change in the conditions of existence man himself remains unchanged, subject to a uniform law of mental and moral progression.*

* Independently of the proofs Spiritualism affords of the continuity of life after death, it surely must be a source of untold comfort to thousands to know that some loved one whom they have followed to the grave without a hope for his or her future, is *not* lost for ever; but, on the contrary, will undoubtedly find a path opened in the

Men are shocked to think that the foolish and uncultivated *here* are the same *there*.

The puerility and grotesqueness of many of the present day manifestations and the downright absurdity of much of the teaching of modern Spiritualism will be felt by others to tell strongly against the theory. It is, however, questionable whether the untruthfulness and commonplace twaddle so frequently met with at séances are not really evidences of the genuineness of the phenomena. When we look around and see the prevalence of "commonplace twaddle" and the tendency to exaggeration, often amounting to untruthfulness, amongst embodied spirits, there is little room for objection on this ground. The question of the genuineness of the phenomena is, however, one of *fact*, and the decision must rest upon reasonable evidence. It should be borne in mind that in the Hebrew Scriptures we have an account of one phase of Spiritualism chiefly—viz., that which is connected with Hebrew theology. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that the Witch of Endor was consulted on

spiritual world, sooner or later, for progress towards a higher and nobler life.

theological matters *only*. The consultation of "the seer" by Saul when in search of his asses, and the many Scriptural allusions to the seers of the neighbouring nations, lead to the inference that there were many mediums, or seers, in those days;* and we are not justified in concluding that the manifestations of past ages were free from the absurdities and even the wickednesses that are sometimes connected with modern Spiritualism. In the apocryphal books of the New Testament, we meet with accounts of spiritual phenomena, equalling, in triviality and absurdity, any of the modern manifestations, and that in connexion with what are regarded as sacred things.

It is surely needless to suggest that the existence of silly spiritualists or the ramblings of ignorant and foolish spirits no more disprove the truth of Spiritualism than the ravings of fanatical christians disprove the truth of Christianity.

The students of spiritual literature well know that it contains a mixture of the foolish, the ridiculous, and the sublime. In support of the last part of this assertion, I refer to the inspirational orations

* 1 Chronicles xxii. 9.

of Mrs. Cora V. Tappan (pace *Spectator*), the philosophical lectures through the mediumship of Mr. Morse, the works of A. J. Davis, the writings of Charles Linton (especially his "Healing of the Nations"); and among a host of others I would mention, particularly, a series of "Spirit Teachings" which have been given by some advanced spirits through the mediumship of a gentleman in private life who does not wish his name to be published. These "teachings," which are made public in the columns of *The Spiritualist*, have been opposed to the views of the medium through whom they have been given, and have been subjected by him to a severe and clever analysis. With one or two extracts from these "teachings," taken from *The Spiritualist*, November 6, 1874, I will conclude.

"Doubtless we teach that there is one supreme Being over all; one who is not manifested as man has fancied, but who has always announced to His creatures from time to time such facts about Himself as they were able to comprehend, or more strictly, has enabled them to develop in their minds truer views of Himself and of His dealings. We tell you, as Jesus told his followers, of a loving, holy, pure God who guides and governs the universe,

who is no impersonal conception of the human mind, but a real Spiritual Father; who is no embodiment or personification of a force, but a really-existent Being; albeit known to you only by His operations and through your conceptions of His nature and attributes. This is what we have spoken to you, eradicating, so far as we have been able, that which, in your mind, seemed to us to be dishonouring to the All-wise Father, but leaving undisturbed other theological fancies which are not of special import.

“ If you say that our teaching tends to show that there is no such thing as absolute truth in such matters, we can but express our thankfulness that we have so far made ourselves intelligible. No doubt there is for you, in your present imperfect state, no such thing as absolute truth, as there is no such thing as absolute perfection. You surely do not expect that your eye can gaze undimmed into mysteries which dazzle the vision of the highest intelligences. Surely you do not hope that your circumscribed mind can grasp the Infinite and Incomprehensible; that which to us in remotest cycles shall still remain a subject of adoring wonder. The suggestion can but be born of ignorance caused

by the imperfect state of development in which you now live. For you truth must be variable, not to be grasped in its entirety, not to be viewed in minute detail, but seen only in shadowy outline through an encircling veil.

“ We do not even pretend that we reveal to you absolute truth, seeing that we ourselves are yet ignorant, longing to dive deeper into much that is still mysterious. We do but give you such aid as we are permitted, in shadowing forth for yourself conceptions of the Supreme which are less widely removed from truth than those which have passed current among you as the immediate revelation of the Most High.

“ We have succeeded in evolving a system of theology which you admit to be coherent, beautiful, and elevated, and which is acceptable to your mind. We have not ventured to do more. We have shown you a God who commands your adoration and respect. We have displayed to you a rational and comprehensible view of your duty to Him, to mankind, and to your own self; and we have established our moral code, not by the persuasive inducements of a heaven and hell such as you are wont to hear of, but by arguments not less persuasive, by induce-

ments which do not come home less forcibly to the mind. . . . We boldly assert that we teach a faith which is more calculated to deter from sin than any yet propounded for man's acceptance—one that holds out to him a more rational hope for his hereafter—one that is to him more real, more comprehensible than any which has yet been put before him. That faith, we say again, is Divine. It comes to you as the revelation of God. We do not expect or wish that it should become current among men until they are fitted to receive it. For that time we wait in patient prayer. When it does spread among men, and they can yield its precepts an intelligent obedience, we do not hesitate to say that man will sin less, in hope of a cheap salvation, that he will be guided by a more intelligent and intelligible future, that he will need fewer coercive regulations, fewer punishments by human law, and that the motive-spring within him will be found to be not less forcible and enduring than that debased system of heavenly inducements and hellish deterrents, which can stand no serious probing, and which, when once rationally examined, ceases to allure or to deter, and crumbles into dust, baseless, irrational, and absurd."

Christianity:

ITS DIVINE AND HUMAN ELEMENTS.

"What is called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients, and was not absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh ; from which time the true religion which existed already began to be called Christian."—*St. AUGUSTINE, 4th Century.*

"But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."—*LUKE ix. 55.*

THE word Christianity bears two meanings and conveys two distinct ideas, agreeably to the context with which it is associated. Speaking of the English as a "Christian people," the idea conveyed would be that the English nation believed in the tenets of dogmatic Christianity. On the other hand, if it were said of any particular individual, "He is a Christian man," it would be understood that the person alluded to was Christ-like in spirit—*e.g.*, that he was kind, sympathising, and self-denying. To rightly distinguish between the two meanings attached to this word involves a perception of the difference between the human and divine elements in conventional Christianity.

Eighteen hundred years ago, in a little obscure village in Palestine, was born a child whose fame and influence have extended to the present day. Amongst the most highly civilised nations of the earth, the religion associated with the name of Jesus is professedly believed in and accepted as a revelation from God Himself. Here is a fact to be accounted for by those who reject the orthodox explanation: the secret of the spread of Christianity among the most enlightened races of the world—what is it? Wherein consists the power of that religion which spreads its branches far and wide? Surely its roots must have penetrated deep down into the heart of humanity to make such a result possible! The question demands a solution at the hands of “unbelievers” which shall be at once reasonable and adequate.

Jesus was a Jew, born of Jewish parents, and early instructed in Hebrew theology. It is no presumption to suppose that he was a precocious child, with a tendency to thoughtfulness and piety. His questioning the doctors in the Temple at an early age leads fairly to the inference that his tastes lay in the direction of spiritual philosophy and religious literature.. It may also be inferred

that during the time Jesus was “subject to his parents” at Nazareth—increasing in wisdom and stature—and previous to his baptism by John (by far the larger part of his life), his studies lay in the direction of his predilections. The sacred books of the Hebrews were undoubtedly well known to Jesus at the time he commenced his ministry.* The tendencies which prompted Jesus to make himself acquainted with the philosophy and theology of his own countrymen would naturally lead him to search into the philosophies and theologies of other nations.

The Jews at the time of Christ’s advent, as now, were looking for their “promised Messiah,” who should deliver them out of all their troubles, and restore them to their former greatness. Jerusalem was to be the city of the great King, before whose sovereignty all the nations of the earth were to

* The Lord’s Prayer was derived from the older Jewish prayer, which was as follows : “Our Father which art in heaven ; hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of Thee be glorified in heaven above, and upon earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us, now and for ever. The holy men of old said, remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against me. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing. For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and for evermore.”—(The Works of Rev. John Gregorie, p. 160. London, 1685).

bow down and worship. Among the Jews of that day, although, perhaps, not altogether of them, lived a sect of ascetics known as the Essenes. These people corresponded in some respects to the Quakers of the present, or rather past, day. They engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, but lived in a higher sphere, counting earthly things of little worth in comparison with the higher life of communion with God and the spiritual world. In many respects they resembled the Therapeuts of Alexandria, and both sects had points of likeness with those Indian ascetics who were known to the Greeks as Gymnosophists. In a volume recently issued by Mr. Lumisden Strange, late a Judge of the High Court of Madras, entitled, "The Sources and Development of Christianity,"* there are some most interesting details of the teachings and practices of this ancient sect. Speaking of their identity with the Gymnosophists, Mr. Strange says :—

"These Gymnosophists, who were formerly in great favour in the island of Meroe, giving laws to the kings, became afterwards the Essenes or Car-

* Trübner & Co., London.

melites, and their books, which they were bound with such solemn vows to keep secret, must have been the Vedas, or some Indian books, containing their mythological traditions. The idea of Pliny was that the sect had existed thousands of years. . . . The Essene customs, of abstaining from animal food in order to maintain spiritual purity, resorting to oblations before meals, or when tainted by contact with those of a lower class, and undergoing death by starvation rather than submitting to the defilement of taking the food of those who were accounted impure, are characteristic of the Hindus of the present day. . . . Josephus says these men live the same kind of life as do those whom the Greeks call Pythagoreans (Ant. xv., x. 4). The Essene principles are connected in a multitude of instances with the speculations of the school of Pythagoras. . . . There was in both an ascetic habit of life; a rejection of flesh, of wine, of marriage, and of sacrifice of animals; both prescribed the wearing of white garments, purifications, a sacerdotal tone, a moral life, a refraining from oaths and slavery, an organisation into ranks, silence and the observance of mysteries, belief in divine destiny and intermediate beings; both taught reverence for

the sun and retreat from the world, as well as the immortality of the soul" (Keim's "Hist. of Jesus," cited by Mr. Strange).*

The practices and beliefs of the Essenes are set forth at some length in Mr. Strange's profoundly interesting work, to which the reader is referred. It will be necessary here to give only a few additional characteristics of this sect. Mr. Strange observes:—

"They (the Essenes) literally had all things in common. According to Philo and Josephus they were 'despisers of riches,' they ate only so far as not to be hungry, and drank just enough to escape thirst; they had no certain city, and a member of their sect, although a perfect stranger, would at once be received and entertained as a brother. They, therefore, carried nothing with them when they travelled. They were good citizens, eminent for fidelity; they avoided swearing, and it was a saying with them that 'he who cannot be believed without swearing by God is already condemned.' They were noticed for their silence and their

* A translation of Keim's "Jesus of Nazara" is published by Williams & Norgate.

sobriety. They rejected pleasure as an evil, but esteemed continence and the conquest of the passions as a virtue. A priest said grace before meat, and it was unlawful to taste food before grace had been said. In every house there was a sacred shrine which was called the holy place, in which they retired by themselves and performed all the mysteries of a holy life, studying the laws and the sacred oracles of God, enunciated by the holy prophets, and hymns and psalms and all kinds of other things, by reason of which knowledge and piety were increased and brought to perfection. The seventh day was counted sacred, on which they abstained from all employments and frequented the synagogues, and there sat, according to their age, in classes—the younger sitting under the elder—and listening with attention in becoming order. One of the elders read from the holy volume, and another of the greatest experience stood forth and explained what was not very intelligible, for a great many precepts were delivered in enigmatical modes of expression and allegorically as the old fashion was; and thus the young were taught the love of God, the love of virtue, and the love of mankind. They laboured

till the fifth hour, after which they assembled in one place, and when they had clothed themselves in white veils, they bathed their bodies in cold water. When this purification was completed they assembled in the dining-room as in a holy temple, and quietly sat themselves down. They considered themselves citizens of heaven and of the world. Their doctrine was, that their bodies were corrupt, and that the matter they were composed of was not permanent, but that their souls were immortal—that the souls came out of the most subtile air and were united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they were drawn by a certain natural enticement, but that when released from their bodies the souls rejoiced and mounted upwards. They contemned the miseries of life and were above pain, and as for death, if it were for their glory, they esteemed it better than life. There is abundant evidence how great were the souls of these men, for although in the war with the Romans they were tortured, burnt, and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torture, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either. No one,

not even of their immoderately cruel tyrants, nor of the more treacherous and hypocritical oppressors was ever able to bring any real accusation against the multitude of those called Essenes or Holy.”*

From these illustrations it seems impossible to avoid perceiving the points of identity between the views and practices of the Essenes and the character and teachings of Christ. Much that is difficult to understand in Christ’s teaching is explained by this reference to the usages of the Essenes. The communism advocated by Jesus, the contempt expressed for earthly grandeur and riches, the disregard of the body that the soul might be elevated, the injunction to the disciples to take neither purse nor scrip in their travels, to avoid swearing, the purification by water, &c., are all in keeping with the distinctive features of Essene practices and teachings. Philo says the Essenes derived their name from their piety.

“That the teachings of the Essenes (continues Mr. Strange) were anterior to Christianity is indi-

* The materials from which Mr. Strange has drawn are to be found in Philo, iii. 523-526; iv. 4-9, 15-20, 220, 221; and Josephus, Ant. xviii. 1-5; Wars, ii., viii. 2-II.

cated by Philo Judæus—a contemporary of Christ who died about A.D. 60—referring to their writings as of ancient men. Josephus speaks of an Essene named Judas who prophesied the death of Antigonus, the predecessor of Herod, and of another, Manahem, who, when Herod was a child, predicted that he should be king of the Jews" (Ant. xiii., xi. 2).

That the teachings of Jesus closely corresponded to the views and practices of the Essenes seems to be self-evident, and that a natural explanation of many of the characteristic features of the Christ of the Synoptics is afforded by this insight into the spirit of Essene modes of life and thought, seems equally clear. In the case of Jesus, it is suggested these Essene influences operated upon, and were assimilated by a mind prepossessed with a firm belief in Hebrew theology, and well versed in the testimony of the law and the prophets.

On the question of the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels, the author of a recent and very remarkable work, entitled "Supernatural Religion," commits himself to the statement that—

"After having exhausted the literature and the testimony bearing upon that point (the evidence for

the Synoptic Gospels), we have not found a single distinct trace of any of those Gospels during the first century and a half after the death of Jesus.”*

Speaking of the Fourth Gospel the same author says—

“ We have seen that for some century and a half after the events recorded in the work, there is not only no testimony whatever connecting the Fourth Gospel with the Apostle John, but no certain trace of the existence of the Gospel. There has not been the slightest evidence in any of the writings of the Fathers which we have examined even of a tradition that the Apostle John had composed any evangelical work at all.”

Further, we read†—

“ The facts stated by Papias fully justify the conclusion that our first and second Synoptics cannot be the works said to have been composed by Matthew and Mark. The third Synoptic is an avowed compilation by one who was not an eye-witness of the occurrences narrated, and the identity of the writer

* Vol. ii. p. 248. (The reader is referred to Canon Lightfoot’s criticisms of this work in the *Contemporary Review* as to the value of this negative evidence.)

† S. R. p. 48.

cannot be established. As little was the supposed writer of the second Synoptic a personal witness of the scenes of his history. The author of the Fourth Gospel is unknown, and no impartial critic can assert the historical character of his narrative. Apart from continual minor contradictions throughout all these narratives, it is impossible to reconcile the markedly different representations of the Fourth and of the Synoptic Gospels. They mutually destroy each other as evidence. These Gospels themselves do not pretend to be inspired histories, and they cannot upon any ground be regarded as more than mere human compositions. As evidence for miracles and the reality of a Divine Revelation, they have no weight, being merely narratives written long after the events recorded by unknown persons who were neither eye-witnesses of the supposed miraculous occurrences, nor hearers of the statements they profess to report.”*

* It is but fair to state that Canon Lightfoot in his elaborate criticism of “Supernatural Religion” (*Contemporary Review*) controverts the conclusions of its author. A careful perusal of the arguments, *pro* and *con*, can hardly fail to show the doubtful character of the testimony relied upon as sufficient to prove the authenticity and trustworthiness of the Gospel records.

Internal evidence indicates an identity of origin for the Synoptics, whilst the Fourth Gospel is undoubtedly the work of an independent writer—one who had become strongly imbued with the philosophy of Philo, and at the same time profoundly impressed with the Messianic claims made for or by Christ. The author of the Fourth Gospel—whatever he may have been—took the first step towards the deification of Jesus by identifying him with the Logos—the Word or Wisdom of God, “Who in the beginning was with God, and was God.”

Again, referring to Mr. Strange's volume, we read—

“Philo Judæus lived in an important time, covering the whole period ascribed to the founder of Christianity. He was of Alexandria, and wrote to about A.D. 60. Philo was much occupied in interpreting the Jewish Scriptures, which he allegorised with the utmost freedom, and being so imbued with Grecian doctrines as to be accounted a follower of Pythagoras and Plato (Euseb. Ec. Hist. iv. 4). We have in him that combination of Jewish and Grecian sentiment which enters so largely into the composition of the Christian Logos. His studies led him to dilate upon the attributes of the Divine Logos,

or personified Word of God, a position Jesus is said to have filled. That Philo should be attracted to the operations of the imaginary Grecian Logos and model this object on a Jewish messianic form, was a result natural to such a writer at such a time. But what becomes of the authority of the Christian canonical record when we find the attributes of its central figure, in all their high and very remarkable specialities, anticipated and drawn by the pen of a fanciful writer such as this, himself standing absolutely free of Christianity? I take advantage (continues Mr. Strange) of Mr. Bryant's labours in presenting the following compendium of Philo's views of the Logos in their bearing upon the canonical representations."

A few extracts from Mr. Bryant's work are appended. The reader is referred to Mr. Strange's book itself for the complete selection.

"Philo states the Logos to be the Son of God. The Second Divinity. The first-begotten of God. Superior to angels. Superior to all things in the world. The instrument by whom the world was made. The light of the world. The Logos only can see God. He has God for his portion, and resides in Him. The most ancient of God's works,

and before all things. Esteemed as God. Free from all taint of sin. The fountain of wisdom. A messenger sent by God to man. The advocate and intercessor for mortal man. The shepherd of God's flock. God's beloved Son. The true High Priest. The mediator, &c."—BRYANT on Philo.*

These quotations indicate the materials out of which the history of the Christ of the Fourth Gospel has been constructed. It was undoubtedly the profound conviction of the author of the Fourth Gospel that Jesus was himself the Logos; and thus believing, it was natural he should invest Jesus with the attributes which belonged to the personified Wisdom of God. In the person of Jesus, to this Christian Jew and philosopher, would be combined—the Logos and the Messiah. The distinctive features of the Fourth Gospel, including the basis of the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus, are thus readily accounted for. To a writer so impressed, what more natural than that he should adapt his history to the requirements of his prepossessions, and, out of the mass of

* "Philo's birth is dated at least twenty to thirty years before our era, and his death about A.D. 40. His principal works were certainly written before his embassy to Caius." (Note to p. 264, "Supernatural Religion.")

floating traditions, select those which best harmonised with the attitude of his own mind with respect to the nature and person of Christ? The prophecies of his sacred books must agree with the history of Christ's life and teaching. Bearing this in mind, the growth of the Fourth Gospel, with its distinct and special features, is not by any means incomprehensible.*

Passing on to the consideration of the miracles attributed to Christ, we take up a different position from that of the authors quoted, and by no means deny the possibility of intercommunion between the natural and the spiritual worlds through the medium of certain "gifted" persons, and the phenomena arising out of such connexion. On the contrary, the occurrence of supra-mundane phenomena, under certain conditions at present but little known, is admitted. That Jesus was one of those "gifted" or "mediumistic" persons of

* This subject is exhaustively treated in the works before referred to ("Supernatural Religion," and "The Sources and Development of Christianity"). It need hardly be urged that, in order to do full justice to questions of such deep interest, it is necessary to weigh carefully whatever can be urged on the other side. The impartial investigator will be amply repaid for the trouble involved, by having his eyes considerably opened, and his sympathies much enlarged.

whose existence modern Spiritualism amply testifies, appears to be reduced almost to a certainty.*

The phenomena occurring in the presence of seers, sensitives, or mediums are of the most diverse and complex nature, depending upon certain physical or mental idiosyncrasies, the nature of which we are at present unable to determine. Phenomena which are *apparently* miraculous are not necessarily without the *pale of law*. The remark applies equally to ancient and modern "miraculous" occurrences. When we consider the ignorance of past ages in matters relating to physical and psychological phenomena, contrasted with the light which modern Spiritualism is throwing upon kindred manifestations, we have no difficulty in tracing a basis of truth in the reported "miraculous" events of those times; nor can we escape the conclusion that occult phenomena of this kind, occurring, as they did for the most part, amongst the most illiterate of the people, would naturally be exaggerated, and, it may be, unconsciously multiplied, in conformity with the tendency we find

* See "The Identity of Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism." Dr. Crowell. (Trow & Son, New York.)

amongst the ignorant and superstitious to intensify, and, in transmitting, to add to the marvels which were fairly presumed by them to be supernatural. Differing, as the writer does, on this point, with the author of "Supernatural Religion," there is nevertheless much truth in the following paragraph:—

"The world is full of illustrations of the rapid growth of legendary matter; and it would indeed have been little short of miraculous had these narratives (the Gospels) been exceptions to the universal rule, written, as they were, under the strongest religious excitement, at a time when almost every ordinary incident became a miracle, and in that mystic period in which reality melted into fable and invention unconsciously trespassed on the province of history."*

Suppose a person at the present day to be possessed of the gift of healing—one phase of mediumship—and to confine his labours chiefly to the lower classes, is it not almost certain that, in the course of time, and especially after his death, he would be credited with many cures which he had never effected, and that there would be many say-

* "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. p. 485.

ings imputed to him which he had never uttered, and that those cases in which his healing powers had undoubtedly been exerted beneficially would be exaggerated, and, unconsciously (it may be), added to, and this in the exact ratio of the ignorance of those among whom this mysterious power had been exercised ?

Bearing these thoughts in mind, let us go back eighteen centuries, and consider the probabilities that such exaggerations and additions were actually made in the case of Jesus. There was no press to criticise, neither were there any scientific checks, such as would undoubtedly be applied at the present day before like events would obtain credence among the intelligent and educated classes. We have also the fact that these stories existed, for many years after the events recorded, as floating traditions ; that few (if any) of these "miraculous" occurrences had been witnessed by the writers of the Gospels themselves ; and that we have not a scrap of the original Gospels existing, nor any reliable account of any one who had seen these records written in the language spoken by their reputed authors. It is not urged that these facts disprove the authenticity of the Gospels ; but they certainly

have weight in the investigation of documents purporting to be miraculously selected and preserved for the benefit of posterity. The position taken by the present writer is this:—History, as a rule, is true in a general sense, but untrustworthy in details. The remark applies especially to sacred history, and that for obvious reasons.* We certainly have plenty of historical evidence in favour of the employment of so-called miraculous powers by those whose creeds have been diverse and conflicting. That Jesus lived and was crucified, there is no reason to disbelieve; that he was miraculously begotten, that he rose bodily from the dead and ascended into space, are matters that we are incapable of deciding, excepting on scientific or philosophical grounds, upon which grounds, it is presumed, orthodox Christians would not hesitate to disallow similar stories recorded in the sacred books of the other faiths of the world. If the balance

* Reviewing a recent work by S. Neal ("The Romantic Legend of Buddha"), the *Guardian* of October 13th, 1875, in a notice of characteristic fairness—speaking of Buddha—says: "The fertility of Eastern imagination has naturally been busy with the reputation of a person whose doctrines spread so wide and so rapidly." Surely the remark is equally applicable to Christ!

of probabilities be against the literal truth of such statements as the "miraculous conception" and "bodily resurrection" of Jesus, it does not, from the writer's standpoint, necessarily involve the denial of so-called supernatural (rather, supramundane) powers to Jesus, or compel us to regard the accounts of his "miracles" as altogether baseless. One of the strongest arguments on the side of Christianity has been summed up in the following words:—

"A Jesus would have been required to forge a Jesus; but this argument does not invest the Gospel records with absolute authority, exalt them above criticism, or presuppose the accuracy of every detail. Mythical accretions may have clustered around centres of fact, and substantive truth may have been dressed in a garment of fiction, with no conscious dishonesty or purpose to deceive, but with the intent of enforcing moral and spiritual lessons, and giving greater honour to a teacher worthy of honour. . . . Even in our days, and with the enormous advantage of modern appliances, aids, and safeguards, it is very difficult to write accurate history; in the first and second centuries it must have been next to impossible to

do so, especially in the midst of eager speculation and vehement controversy."

It is not necessary, from our standpoint, to deny that the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to "The Messiah" were from a supernal source, or that many of those predictions were fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The sensitives or seers of old were the instruments through whom intelligences in the spiritual world communicated with men on earth. These intelligences, from their superior position and knowledge, were possibly able to forecast future events with more or less of certainty. These predictions would probably be perceived but vaguely by the sensitives themselves, thus accounting for the mystical and incoherent character of many of the prophetic utterances, and the highly symbolical language in which the prophets clothed ideas unappreciable, or but dimly perceived by them at the time they were received. Viewing the prophetic books of Scripture in this light, we are able to trace in them much of beauty and truth, without being committed to the theory of infallibility with respect to them. What, however, seems to be clear is this—that many of the selections from these prophecies, which

have been pressed into the service of the writers or compilers of the New Testament as applying to the person and life of Jesus, have been far-fetched and fanciful, and in many cases are readily refuted by their contexts.*

Admitting, then, that the seers of old received, by spirit-influx, an intimation of the probable advent of a Messiah—a prediction we will further allow to have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus—it by no means follows that many passages in their writings, which have been extracted (often violently) from their contexts as predictions of Christ's advent and life, can be reasonably proved to have referred to Christ at all. The abrupt interpolations presented in Matthew ii. 15 and 23, strongly indicate a desire on the part of the writers or compilers of the Gospels to connect certain details of Christ's life with Hebrew prophecies, even at the expense of coherency and consistency. Rational criticism is frequently evaded by referring plain statements of prophetic fulfilments to the completion of their

* Confirmation of this statement will be found in such works as Dr. Adler's Sermons; "The History and Literature of the Israelites" (C. & A. De Rothschild); "An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity" (Hennell).

*types.** The prophecies which are regarded by orthodox Christians as referring to the advent and life of Christ, when submitted to rational criticism, do not afford anything like the amount of evidence that might reasonably be required to substantiate the claims of orthodoxy, or to support the foundations upon which such a stupendous superstructure as Dogmatic Christianity has been erected.

Particulars of the life of Jesus during the years that intervened between his discussion with the doctors in the Temple and the commencement of his ministry would explain much that is obscure and perplexing in the Gospel-history, and would probably unravel to a great extent the growth of legends which gradually became woven around the life of one whose gentleness, purity, and love so won upon the hearts of his followers that—after the example of more ancient faiths—no sooner was their hero dead than they raised him into a god.

But it is impossible to account for a character so unique as Jesus on any other theory than that, in addition to the possession of a most amiable and loving disposition, he was also a medium of inspira-

* *Vide* Dr. M'Caul's paper in "Aids to Faith."

tion from the spiritual world. The almost super-human sensitiveness he displayed to the sorrows and sufferings of mankind ; the keen appreciation of the transitory character of things temporal, and the realities of the spiritual world, and the utter ignoring of self that others might be benefited—these characteristics of a soul so transparent and holy need only the addition of that other something which constitutes a medium or channel of communication between the natural and spiritual worlds (through whom spiritual influences are received and spiritual powers exerted) to explain the character and actions of Jesus.*

The philosophy of mediumship has yet to be written. For the present it will be sufficient to observe that mediumship differs to a great extent both in character and degree. In some cases of

* "The victory of the Christian Religion must be due to some inherent energy, excellence, vitability, suitability to the wants and character of man. Mere circumstances could not explain this victory. We may safely say that this vital force, this inherent excellence, this appropriateness, must have something strange, subtle, unexplained. It testifies to that apocalypse and exemplification of the possibilities of holiness and loveableness latent in humanity, which was embodied in the unique life and character of Jesus."—W. RATHBONE GREG—Preface to the last edition of "The Creed of Christendom."

inspirational mediumship the organism of the medium is partially or completely taken possession of by the controlling intelligence, whereas in the mediumship of genius, which many inherit to a greater or less extent, the natural powers of the medium become exalted and intensified by contact with the thought-atmosphere of *a higher life*. In the latter case, the mind of the medium is at times flooded with ideas which he readily distinguishes from the products of ratiocination. It is true, these ideas are often vague and incoherent, subject to no sort of sequence or arrangement—shadowy, it may be, and incomprehensible pictures, which take shape and coherence only after much and deep thought. These ideas are the secretions of the brain, say the materialistic philosophers. They are the life elements of the food of the soul—originating in the world of causes—says the spiritualist.

The true philosophy of genius, from the writer's point of view, will be found embedded in this inter-blending of the natural and spiritual worlds, whereby certain "gifted" or "mediumistic" persons—that is, persons possessing certain organic idiosyncrasies—live to a great extent in this higher world, imbibing more or less consciously (and sometimes quite

unconsciously) thoughts from the great ocean of spirit which surrounds and fills the universe of matter, in which man lives and moves and has his being.* It must be borne in mind that a medium's individuality or personality is not lost in this process. The thoughts are his own—from assimilation and appropriation—in the same way that his bodily life is his own from his individual absorption of the life-elements of the food he takes. And such, with all reverence, it is suggested, was the nature of the mediumship of one whose genius was Love. The keen susceptibilities of Jesus rendered him peculiarly responsive to that phase of the Divine intelligence which best harmonised with his own characteristics. By that mysterious law of sympathy which appears to rule in the world of Spirit, it would seem that the more perfect the medium

* Professor Tyndall says:—"I picture life as imminent everywhere. Nor am I anxious to shut out the idea that the life here spoken of may be but a subordinate part and function of a higher life, as the living, moving blood is subordinate to the man. I resist no such idea so long as it is not dogmatically imposed" ("Materialism and its Opponents") The "higher life" which Professor Tyndall does not object to postulate as a possible explanation of this life—to the spiritual philosopher is the spring and source of all ethical knowledge and higher instincts.

the clearer his perceptions. Thus can we understand, to some extent at least, the secret of the power and influence of Jesus. The embodiment of unselfishness, purity, and love represents man's highest idea of God; hence Jesus represents man's most advanced thought of Deity. Do men not err in confounding the mirror with that which is reflected therein? Is there not an immeasurable distance between the God manifested and the human manifestation? Is not God all that Jesus was, *and infinitely more?* This truth seems to underlie some of the sayings attributed to Jesus wherein he, in his hours of supreme exaltation, asserted the identity of his spirit with the Divine spirit, yet that one was greater than the other.

Thus, regarding Jesus as a medium, or channel of communication between the two worlds—a medium or seer, moreover, whose idiosyncrasies rendered him capable of receiving and manifesting the highest and holiest influences from the spiritual world—we are able to reconcile much that is otherwise perplexing in his conduct and teachings, inasmuch as it is not necessary from this point of view to regard him as infallible. The perceptions of mediums are inevitably mixed up and coloured with

their mental prepossessions. That this was known to Jesus seems clear from the persistency wherewith he ever pointed men to the only One who is good —*i.e.*, to his Father and their Father—to his God and their God.

The doctrine of “The Deity of Christ” is not to be found in the teachings of Jesus as set forth in the Synoptics. In the Fourth Gospel, the identification of Jesus with the Logos accounts for the whole tenor of the author’s treatment of the person and life of Christ. It seems impossible for any intelligent truthseeker to read the Gospel narratives without perceiving that the gist of their teachings lies in the importance of imitating the life and spirit of Christ; in the surrender of the finite will to the Infinite will; in a reverent conception of God as “Our Father,” and in a life of self-abnegation for the welfare of humanity. This, it is contended, is the Christianity of Christ, and it is divine. The spirit of Christ is the only passport to the Divine heart. No man cometh to the Father by any other way. “He that loses his life shall find it.” The cross is a beautiful symbol of self-sacrifice, and, as such, a fitting emblem of Christianity. Alas! how frequently is it prostituted to be a mere badge of

party feeling, or a bauble to adorn its most unchristian wearer !

Having thus glanced at the nature of the spirit of true Christianity, and traced the views and teachings of Jesus to sources anterior to the Christian era, we proceed to follow, in general outline, the gradual accretion of dogmas which were unknown to Christ, and which have ultimately in the conventional Christianity of the present day. In this direction will be found a natural explanation of the rise and progress of those eminently human productions—the theological dogmas of an ecclesiastical Christianity.

It has been shown that the seeds of the doctrine of the Deity of Christ had been sown in the Fourth Gospel, the author of which had identified Jesus not only with the Jewish Messiah, but also with the Logos of Philo. For some time after the death of Christ the disciples had confined their ministrations to the Jews only. They, as yet, regarded Jesus as “a man approved of God,”* and required of their converts simply to “repent and be baptised in the name of Christ.”† “The God of our fathers,” says

* *Acts ii. 22.*

† *Acts ii. 38.*

Peter, " raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged upon a tree,"*—words applicable to a prophet, not to God incarnate.

That some of the apostles had " Spiritual gifts," or, in the language of Modern Spiritualism, were mediumistic, is not doubted, neither is it improbable that Jesus himself was the controlling intelligence in many of the spiritual manifestations that occurred in the presence of the apostles.†

* Acts v. 30.

† The identity of modern with ancient Spiritualism, as ably shown by Dr. Crowell in his recent work on " Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism," will be objected to by many real Christians on grounds of feeling rather than reason. Dr. Carpenter, Professors Tyndall and Huxley, with their attendant satellites, may sneer at Spiritualism altogether. It will, nevertheless, be found that Spiritualism rests upon facts which no amount of ignorant abuse or scientific drollery can annihilate. To us, Spiritualism is the key which unlocks the mysteries of historical religions and the only philosophy which accounts for the intelligent movement of the scientist's atomic molecules in their aggregation into organic form and structure. Matter may contain, potentially, the possibilities of life and thought, if so it is by virtue of its spiritual essence and origin. Whether the actions of apparently lifeless matter be ascribed to an internal or external cause is of little importance to the Spiritualist, who regards such manifestations as evidences of the directive power of a Supreme Will. Resting intelligently upon the hypothesis that *Mind rules*, the Spiritualist is contented to leave the *how* to be decided by evidence. Strange, indeed, and inconsistent with his anti-dogmatic assurances, is a remark of Professor Tyndall's, in his article on " Materialism and its Oppo-

Peter's vision, as recorded in Acts x., appears to have been the opening of Christianity to the Gentiles. We read that, under the preaching of Peter

nents," in the *Fortnightly*, in which he stigmatises a belief in Spiritualism as "intellectual whoredom." It were better for the Professor's reputation as a man of science to have withheld a remark so ill-chosen and uncalled for. To disprove the facts upon which a belief in Spiritualism rests would surely be the more scientific course. To deny on *a priori* grounds the real objective character of the phenomena called Spiritual is unscientific. In the admirable paper in which this unfortunate remark occurs, the Professor appeals to certain phenomena which result from the action of the sun's heat on sea water. It is presumed Professor Tyndall states facts on evidence which has been, or is capable of being, affirmed by his senses. Why, it may be asked, is the same kind of evidence to be treated with derision when advanced in favour of the facts upon which a belief in Spiritualism is based? Surely, the modesty which is proverbially associated with a great mind should have prevented such an unseemly exhibition of temper. The truly scientific mind should be superior to this sort of thing. There may be facts as yet unknown to Professor Tyndall—facts which may help to elucidate if not to solve some of the mighty problems which are raised by his, in some respects, unequalled scientific investigations and philosophical speculations. The following extract from a recent *Westminster Review* presents Spiritualism in a different, and possibly truer, light: "Religions are not made: they grow. Their progress is not from the enlightened to the vulgar, but from the vulgar to the enlightened. They are not products of the intellect, but manifest themselves as physical forces, too. The religion of the future is in our midst already, working like potent yeast in the minds of the people. It is in our midst to-day, with signs and wonders uprising like a swollen tide, and scorning the barriers of Nature's law. But, however irresistible its effects, they are not declared on the surface. It comes,

—a trance and healing medium—powerful mental and physical manifestations occurred. Jews and Gentiles were “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and “spoke with tongues,”* psychological phenomena doubtless, similar to those which occur in our own day at séances and at religious revival meetings.†

veiling its destined splendours beneath an exterior that invites contempt. Hidden from the prudent, its truths are revealed to babes. Once more the weak will confound the mighty, the foolish the wise, and base things and things despised, it may be even things that are not, bring to naught things that are, for it seems certain that—whether truly or whether falsely—SPIRITUALISM will re-establish, on what professes to be ground of positive evidence, the fading belief in a future life—not such a future as is dear to the reigning theology, but a future developed from the present—a continuation under improved conditions of the scheme of things around us. Further than this it is impossible to predict the precise development which Spiritualism may take in the future, just as it would have been impossible at the birth of Christianity to have predicted its actual subsequent development; but *from the uncramped power possessed by this new religious force* of fusing with other creeds, it seems likely in the end to bring about a greater uniformity of belief than has ever yet been known.”

* Acts ii. 4

† The operation of conversion at the recent revival meetings of the American Revivalists “was performed then and there in the Bow Road Hall, as some of the converts say, by one look from Mr. Moody.”
—*The Times*, July 21st, 1875.

The “Spiritual Gifts,” or mediumistic qualities, latent in many persons, are frequently aroused and suddenly developed in times of great excitement, and in the presence of powerful mediums. The excitement attendant upon inspirational mediumship is very contagious, and in many cases quite uncontrollable.

About the same time, we meet with another trance medium in the person of Saul of Tarsus, whose conversion is recorded in Acts ix. Saul was a Jew, thoroughly grounded in Hebrew theology. He went with Barnabas to Antioch, and abode there a whole year. We further read (Acts xi. 26)—“And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” In the person of Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul, Judaism and Christianity became more intimately associated.

That Paul believed in the *bodily* resurrection of Jesus appears certain.* From the writer’s point of view, however, the resurrection of Christ’s body is not needed to explain the appearance of Jesus to Paul on his journey to Damascus any more than it is necessary to believe that the graves were opened in the graveyards of Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, to account for the appearances of the spiritual visitors to their friends in that city. In those days they thought otherwise, and wrote as they thought.

The spirit of bigotry and persecution soon displayed itself in Paul’s teaching. “He was taught

* *Acts xxvi. 23.*

by the revelation of Jesus,"* and he who preached any other Christianity than Paul's was "to be accursed."† We gather the leading points of Paul's teaching by glancing at his discourses as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and by referring to one or two of the Epistles. In Acts xiii., Paul speaks of Israel having been "chosen of God," and of Christ as David's son, "of whose seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."‡ With Paul, Jesus was the promised Messiah of whom the Prophets spoke, and it was belief in the Messiahship of Jesus which justified from all things from which the Jews could not be justified by the law of Moses.§

The sacrificial aspect of Christ's death had not as yet developed itself, but was a logical outcome of Paul's conversion. Repentance towards God and faith in Jesus, as the Messiah whom God had raised from the dead, embraced the substance of Paul's teaching as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In the Epistles to the Corinthians and to the Galatians, we find a gradual unfolding of the doctrine of

* Gal. i. 12.

† Gal. i. 9.

‡ Acts xiii. 23.

§ Acts xiii. 23.

the Atonement arising out of the connexion between Judaism and Christianity.

“The life I now live I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and *gave himself for me.*”* “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a *curse for us.*”† “For as many of you as have been *baptised* into Christ have put on Christ.”‡ “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye *Abram’s seed,* and heirs according to the promise.”§ “That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.*”||

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (whoever may have been the author) we find this doctrine fully developed.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”¶ “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he

* Gal. ii. 20.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ Gal. iii. 27.

§ Gal. iii. 29.

|| 1 Cor. v. 19.

¶ Hebrews ii. 14.

might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*"* "Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him. Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec."† "By so much was Jesus *made a surety of a better testament.*"‡ "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but *by his own blood* he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."§ "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated *without blood.*"|| "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¶

Here then is Judaic Christianity fully developed, and the doctrine of the Atonement established. It is possible, in the Epistles, to trace the germs from whence have arisen the doctrines of "Baptismal Regeneration" and the "Real Presence;" also the incipient stages of a creedal Christianity, together with the perils of unbelief. It is, however, impos-

* Hebrews ii. 17.

+ Hebrews v. 9-10.

‡ Hebrews vii. 22.

§ Hebrews ix. 12.

|| Hebrews ix. 18.

¶ Hebrews ix. 26.

sible to find a belief in the doctrine of the Deity of Christ insisted on in the Epistles. The few passages where this doctrine might be inferred, from the language of the writer (where not traceable to exaggerated hyperbole), will be found, on close analysis, to yield to other explanations, and to be counterpoised by the distinction which is constantly made between God and Christ. Throughout the Epistles Christ remains a created being, an instrument with qualities conferred by his Father, and his resurrection is frequently and uniformly attributed to the power of God. "For it became him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* Verses such as these (abounding, as they do, throughout the Epistles) from their very construction, indicate the absence of any conception of Jesus as "Very God of Very God."†

Thus far then we have traced the distinctive

* Hebrews ii. 10.

† For evidence on this point, the reader is referred to "An Examination of Canon Liddon's Bampton Lectures on 'The Divinity of Christ,'" by a Clergyman of the Church of England. (Trübner & Co., London.)

features of Christ's practices and teaching, to sources anterior to the Christian era. We have glanced at the spirit of Christianity as distinguished from so-called Christian dogmas. We have noticed the origin and development of the doctrines of the Deity of Christ, and the Atonement, together with the gradual tendency towards an ecclesiastical or creedal Christianity—involving the eternal perdition of unbelievers, which is the logical outcome of the system. Trinitarian conceptions of the God-head not unnaturally follow a belief in these doctrines, the origin of which we have traced to the mould in which Christianity was cast—*i.e.*, the conditioned modes of thought of the prominent Jewish converts to Christianity. It seems impossible to avoid perceiving the distinction between the Christianity of the Epistles and the Gospels.

"We may look in vain in the Synoptic Gospels for the doctrines elaborated in the Pauline Epistles and the Gospel of Ephesus. The great transformation of Christianity was effected by men who had never seen Jesus, and who were only acquainted with his teaching when already transmuted by

tradition. The fervid imagination of the East constructed Christian theology.”*

From the times of the Apostles nearly all that is known of the progress of Christianity is derived from Eusebius.

“All Jewish and heathen writers who flourished during the first seventy years of our first century are completely silent on the existence of the Christian Church, and they appear utterly ignorant of the miracles, doctrines, persons, and events related in the narratives of the now rejected and received Gospels.”†

A little further on we read:—

“Eusebius, who flourished about A.D. 315, is the next Christian writer who quotes external evidence regarding the Christians. He quotes from a passage in Josephus’ *Antiquities* (book xviii., ch. 3), where Josephus is made to say, ‘At this time there existed Jesus, a wise man, if it be allowed to call him a man, for he performed wonderful works and instructed those who received the truth with joy; he thus drew to himself many Jews and many

* “Supernatural Religion,” vol. ii., 486.

† “Our First Century.” Scott’s Series.

Greeks; *e.g.*, he was Christ; Pilate having punished him with crucifixion on the accusation of our leading men, those who had loved him before still remained faithful to him; for on the third day he appeared unto them, living anew, just as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct even at the present day.' This is a translation of the whole passage. It has not the least connexion with what precedes or follows. It was unknown to all the previous defenders of Christianity. Josephus was a Jew, and ever remained such. It is quite contrary to the Jewish creed to say that Christ has appeared on earth. The destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of their nation are to them standing proofs that Christ, their restorer and triumphant deliverer, never can have come. Consequently, it is impossible that Josephus wrote this passage."

Again, the same writer in a more recent pamphlet* says :—

"Moreover, to assume that the narratives contained in the first six books of Eusebius' Ecclesi-

* "Primitive Church History." Scott's Series.

astical History are substantially authentic and historical, would be an equally arbitrary assumption, for, in fact, we know that the very reverse is the case."

It will be seen that much depends upon the accuracy of Eusebius, who declares himself:—

"That he was the first historian who had undertaken to write a history of the Christian Church—that it was beyond his power to present that history in a full and continuous state—that in attempting the subject he was entering upon a trackless and unbeaten path—that he was unable to find even the bare vestiges of those who may have toiled through the way before him—and that he had not been able to find that any of the Christian ecclesiastical writers had directed their efforts to present anything carefully in this department of writing." ". . . . Eusebius is our only authority for that period of Christianity. . . . As Eusebius lived about A.D. 315, he could not, of course, be an authority of any value for events supposed to have taken place A.D. 60, A.D. 30, or A.D. 1."*

Perhaps the most interesting part of Mr. Strange's book is that in which he points out the Gentile

* "Primitive Church History." Scott's Series.

influences upon the Christianity of the apostles' days; the blending of Grecian mythology with Judaic Christianity; and the doctrinal developments arising out of such a connexion. One is tempted to transcribe, bodily, the chapter on "The Gentile Moulds of Christianity," so interesting and suggestive are his remarks. It must, however, suffice for our present purpose to observe that the modification of some of the earlier doctrines of Judaic Christianity, and the introduction of other doctrines and practices, distinctly Grecian, together with the gradual development of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, are clearly demonstrated. From which it will be seen that Christianity very soon—

"Passed out of the pure morality of its infancy when, untroubled by complicated questions of dogma, simple faith and pious enthusiasm had been the one great bond of Christian brotherhood, into a phase of ecclesiastical development in which religion was fast degenerating into theology, and complicated doctrines were rapidly assuming that rampant attitude which led to so much bitterness, persecution, and schism."*

* "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii. 103.

Christianity in its primitive form, says Mr. Strange,—*

“Was necessarily shaped out of Judaic elements, from the midst of which it sprung. These were afforded by the Jewish Scriptures, the tenets of the Essenes and Therapeuts, and the Neo-Platonic theories of the Logos, as expounded by such a writer as Philo. When the movement was influenced by a large accession of Gentile converts, it was natural, while the development was in progress, that occasion should be found for admitting those strong currents of belief upon which this class had habitually depended ; and thus the doctrines and mythologies of the Greeks, Egyptians, and Hindus, all met with in Alexandria, became laid under contribution to impart form and fixity of character to the nascent faith. Christians, conscious of their higher aims, are loth to acknowledge their obligations to such sources as these, but the similitudes are too frequent and too striking to be accounted for as other than due to deliberate adaptation. A vein of powerful sentiment, common to human nature, runs through

* “The Sources and Development of Christianity,” p. 190.

these imaginings, which has served to give life and solidity to the whole."

Sufficient has been advanced to stimulate truth-seekers to search for themselves and see if these things be so. They may not arrive at the writer's conclusions, but most assuredly their views of Christ and Christianity will be greatly modified, and they may probably be led to see that true Christianity consists, not in the acceptance of metaphysical dogmas about the person of Christ and the nature of Deity, but in the cultivation of that spirit of self-sacrificing love which was the distinguishing characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is frequently urged that Christianity is this "and more." Undoubtedly the remark is true as applied to conventional christianity ; but, inasmuch as Love, in its highest reference, includes Righteousness, whatever more has been added to the simple gospel of love which Jesus lived and taught belongs to the domain of theological speculation, and is, therefore, a matter upon which the greatest diversity of opinion may fairly exist among those who bear the christian name. Doubtless there were circumstances attending the life of Jesus and the

era in which he lived which tended to attract a more than ordinary interest in his career. The possession of extraordinary mediumistic powers (including the gift of healing) would of itself be sufficient to account for the fascination by which his followers were attracted to him. To this may be added the more solid attraction of his noble self-sacrificing spirit. Then, again, the touching pathos of the story of the Cross, appealing as it does to young and old, rich and poor alike, must be taken into account in attempting to suggest a natural explanation of the rise and progress of Christianity in its infancy. There are many undeveloped geniuses in every age. The powers of a Milton, a Mendelssohn, or a Michael Angelo, undoubtedly lie hidden in many of the rude and uncultivated denizens of our towns and villages. Circumstances have not favoured their development. For a man to leave his mark on history, it is necessary, first, that he be a medium or, as it is called, a genius; secondly, that the circumstances of the times should be favourable to his development and notoriety; thirdly, that his followers should be enthusiastic in their leader's praises and loyal to his

cause. Such was the case with Jesus—a son of God truly*—whose words of love and wisdom penetrated the hearts of his followers with a mystic holy influence redolent of heaven and a Father's love. And such were the followers of one whose power was Love. Awed by phenomena which resulted from their leader's mediumship, misunderstanding to a great extent the teachings of one so gifted as Jesus, they nevertheless believed him to be “a prophet sent of God,” and with a loyal enthusiasm they tried to recollect his sayings and walk in the footsteps of their beloved master. About three days after his death, Christ is said to have reappeared as promised to his disciples. In a form sufficiently material to be recognised, and even to partake of fish and honeycomb, he was again in their midst. Moreover, in the presence of his immediate followers—some of whom (it is suggested) were chosen on account of their mediumistic qualities—Jesus continued to manifest his power and influence, and to comfort and aid them in establishing his kingdom of love upon earth.

It may be urged that an adequate explanation

* Romans viii. 14.

yet remains to be given of the *progress* of so-called Christian dogmas. We have traced the origin and growth of these dogmas to their native soil, and further, we have followed their development up to the incipient stages of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Out of the circumstances attending the adoption of Christianity by Constantine, and the conditions (social and political) of the times which led up to the event, together with the ecclesiastical powers established or confirmed by that Emperor—powers which tended to crush out all freedom of thought and expression, and to leave the education of future generations in the hands of a priestly despotism—and, more than all, to the mixture of true Christianity, which we cannot but believe to have been associated with its ecclesiastical accretions—must be attributed the success of dogmatic Christianity along the ages.

The dogmas of Christianity have hitherto, by the masses, been accepted with a blind unreasoning credulity, miscalled faith, and the honest sceptic has been branded “an Infidel.” This state of things is fast subsiding. None but the bigoted and uncultured now regard intellectual differences on theological points as involving moral obliquity.

The *spirit* of Christianity is fast superseding the *letter*, and the time is probably approaching when men of all shades of opinion will find their point of unity in the spirit of love, the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. There are indications of the dawn of this higher and more spiritual Christianity, in which doctrinal differences will not be allowed to separate those who are knit together in the spirit of Christ.* “It might, after all,”

* “We must not, as Christians, Churchmen, and Anglicans, cling obstinately to the decayed anachronisms of the past, nor linger wistfully over the death-stricken forms of bygone days. We must not narrow our intellectual horizon, nor stunt our moral sympathies, but must absorb new truths, gather new ideas, adapt, enlarge, and follow the teaching of the Spirit.”—Canon LIGHTFOOT, Church Congress, 1877.

“Religion is utterly different from petty things of ritual and the jarring discords of sects. There would be no need to be alarmed about the different views taken of religion by men, had they not called by that name the enclosure which they have made in God’s common air. It is not God, but an idol of the tribe that is assailed. The æonian fire of Christ’s sternest metaphors is denounced, not on the harlot, but on dogma without love. Let the knowledge of God’s truth come from the honest practice of His will, and we shall be in no danger of taking false views of religion. There is only one religion in essence, one morality, one pure worship. All true religion can only spring from noble thoughts of God. It is not fetishism, nor fatalism, nor superstitious dread. Men have not been good because they believed particular dogmas, but because they

says an eminent clergyman of the Church of England,* “be unity rather than union which was in the mind of God, a unity embracing all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth.” Is it not useless to strive after an impossible uniformity of theological beliefs? An unity which embraces all who are in active sympathy with the spirit of Christ—whatever be their intellectual differences—is surely the consummation devoutly to be striven after and prayed for by all true christians.

Those who are interested in pursuing the history of the corruptions of Christianity and the consolidation of ecclesiastical powers, will do well to consult Priestley on “The Corruptions of Christianity;” “An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity,” Hennell; and Middleton’s “Free Inquiry,” together with the works previously alluded to in this paper. It is impossible, within the limits of an article, to do more than point the direction in which lies a natural and adequate account of the

trusted in the living God. . . . Morality is the richest service and the grandest liturgy is a loving life. Selfishness is the only deadly sin.”—Canon FARRAR, December 30, 1877.

* The Rev. P. MacLagan, *The Hour*, October 26, 1875.

rise and progress of ecclesiastical or dogmatic Christianity. The earnest inquirer must search for himself. An investigation into the history of the fathers of the so-called Christian Church is a dreary but enlightening exercise. One's faith in the value of their testimony on points of doctrinal theology is considerably modified by a more intimate acquaintance with their opinions and beliefs.

According to the present writer's view, Christianity does not necessitate a belief in such doctrines as "The Fall," "The Atonement," "The Deity of Jesus," a personal Devil, or an eternal Hell—doctrines which, as the writer believes, contain within themselves the elements of their own disintegration and decay, probably by a slow process of modification and an almost imperceptible change in the meaning attached to certain scriptural words and phrases. But Christianity consists in the conception of God as a Father, and the worship of Him in spirit and in truth; in doing to others as we would they should do unto us; in transparent truthfulness and a never-failing charity; in a generosity which is purely unselfish; in a goodness that scorns reward; in an all-embracing love which is capable of sacri-

ficing even life itself for the welfare and happiness of the race. These are the seeds of vital, practical Christianity, and it is to the inherent power of such a Christianity we must attribute the success of the religion of Jesus, and not to its doctrinal accretions.*

* "Jesus himself is the greatest revelation of the infinite powers which are hidden in the soul, waiting to be called forth. He was made in all respects like ourselves, not essentially different from other men. But by his absolute devotion to the Divine will, his perfect trust in the Divine love, his entire surrender of himself to God's truth, he became a revelation to the world, which has now been its meat and drink for eighteen centuries. During this time the highest civilisation of the human race has been fed by his words. Mankind has eaten his flesh and drunk his blood, not merely in a symbolic sacrament, but in reality. The truth of God for which he lived and died, the love of God which he revealed, these were his body and his blood, the substance of his being. His whole life was in these, and because he gave himself so entirely to the service of the race by teaching and living the highest truth, he was enabled to be the founder of a new civilisation. The facts we have recorded of the life of Jesus are few, and the record of his teaching makes a very small book. But as we read those words, as we meditate on that sacred life, there rises in our minds the image of the loftiest soul of which the world has ever formed a conception. He raises our mind to the highest ideal of which it is capable. He stands before the human race as a type of all it may become, and if a vast effect demands a correspondingly great cause, then that mighty stream which we call Christianity must have had its origin in something wonderfully great, and the only adequate cause yet assigned, is the life of that extraordinary person, Jesus of Nazareth."—JAMES FREEMAN CLARK.

"The purity of heart which alone 'sees God' is not dependent on views of the Trinity, or belief in the miraculous birth and incarnation."*

This view of Christianity is repudiated by the evangelical and the sacerdotalist alike. They both attach equal, if not greater importance to belief than to practice, or, at all events, they regard a belief in the dogmas of Christianity as essential to "salvation." "Christianity," said the Bishop of Lichfield at the late Church Congress at Stoke-on-Trent, "knows nothing of practice distinct from doctrine," which is as much as to say that the man who follows the spirit of Christ but is unable to accept the doctrines of the Churches, will "without doubt, perish everlastinglly."

The Bishop of Rochester, at the same Congress, thus expressed himself:—

"From the Protestant communities which reject the idea of one visible body in Christ comes the suggestion, quite untenable, that we should agree to differ in faith—be united only in love. On whatever points we may be divided, on this, at least, we are perfectly at one—that unity can

* "Supernatural Religion."

never be attained by every man following his own ways and ideas."

The Bishop's words breathe (perhaps unconsciously) the very essence of dogmatic Christianity, for it follows from them that a man must yield his most sacred convictions of what is true in order to preserve an unity which, at the price, is not worth having. "To destroy the dogmatic faith is to destroy Christianity, and to destroy Christianity is to destroy religion," says the Rev. E. Garbett, in his Bampton Lectures.

With whom, it may be asked, would Jesus himself be more in sympathy—with the man who believes the doctrines and rejects the life, or with the man who, unable intellectually to accept the doctrines, is nevertheless actively living out his life and spirit? This question is submitted for the serious consideration of those who regard truth as more important than orthodoxy.*

In a posthumous essay by the late Bishop

* Orthodox Christians cannot be allowed to play fast and loose with reason. Intellectual beliefs involve reason as the ultimate standard of appeal, whereas the Christ-like spirit appeals directly to the moral sense, and may safely be left to the spiritual discernment of mankind.

Thirlwall,* it is argued that "the strength of the Papal Church lies in the weakness of human nature."

"1. In its childish fondness for a pompous and glittering ceremonial.

"2. In its slavish readiness to accept without inquiry any pretensions, however unfounded, if they are only put forward with a sufficient degree of confident assurance.

"3. In the cowardice with which it shrinks from responsibility, and is anxious to shift it upon another.

"4. In the intellectual sluggishness which makes it impatient of the labour required for the investigation of truth.

"5. In the proneness to substitute outward devotional exercises as meritorious works in proportion to the trouble and annoyance they may have cost.

"6. And the intolerance with which, especially in matters connected with religion, it resents dissent from its own opinions as a personal injury,

* *Contemporary Review*, October, 1875.

for which it is ever ready to avenge itself by persecution.” With but little modification, the Bishop’s remarks surely admit of a much wider application, and, with one or two exceptions, are amply illustrated by the Christian churches at large.

We conclude, then, that “the secret of the success of Christianity amongst the most highly civilised nations of the earth” consists in the inherent power of the *Christ-like spirit*. The doctrinal accretions are purely human, as may be gathered from their diversity. The doctrines of “The Immaculate Conception” and “Papal Infallibility” form an integral part of a consistent Roman Catholic Christian’s creed; whereas, with Protestant Christians, these dogmas are regarded as blasphemous fables. The doctrine of “the Atonement” is an abomination to Swedenborgian Christians. Even in the Church of England, the High Church and the Low Church are at war to the teeth. Christian sects quarreling about creeds! * Creeds, then, are human; while the

* The Rev. George Chute, vicar of Market Drayton, in a recent address to his parishioners, gave his reasons for secession from the Church of England. The following is an extract:—

“It is certain that the pulpit will hereafter be filled by one who

principle of Christianity is Divine. We distinguish between the human and the Divine when we separate the spirit of Christianity from the creeds of Christendom.

That it is possible for men to be one in spirit with Jesus Christ, who, nevertheless, from the force of honest convictions, are unable to accept the dogmas of Christianity, would probably be allowed by the more thoughtful and cultured of orthodox believers. Under any circumstances, it must be admitted that the most fervent believer knows nothing whatever of Christ *as a person*. What he admires, loves, and adores in Jesus is the spirit manifested by him—the spirit of Love, which is the spirit of God. Hence Jesus, as the personification of Love, occupies the same position in the sphere of the affections as does Mozart in the sphere of music, Shakspeare in literature, and Newton in science—all variously manifesting, in their degree, and according to their respective genius, the endless phases of the Divine love and intelligence.

will set forth doctrines exactly the opposite of those I have set before you. If I preach the truth, the other's preaching must be error. One is God's truth; the other the Devil's lies. . . ."—*Times*, October 15th, 1875.

This view of Christianity has the advantage of excluding none who love the spirit of Christ, although they may never have heard of Jesus. It may not be the Christianity of Paul, or the Fathers of the so-called Christian Churches; but is it not the Christianity of Christ?

THE END.

